



HELEN
GRANT'S
HARVEST
YEAR

BY
AMANDA
• M •
DOUGLAS



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HELEN GRANT'S HARVEST
YEAR

BOOKS BY AMANDA M. DOUGLAS

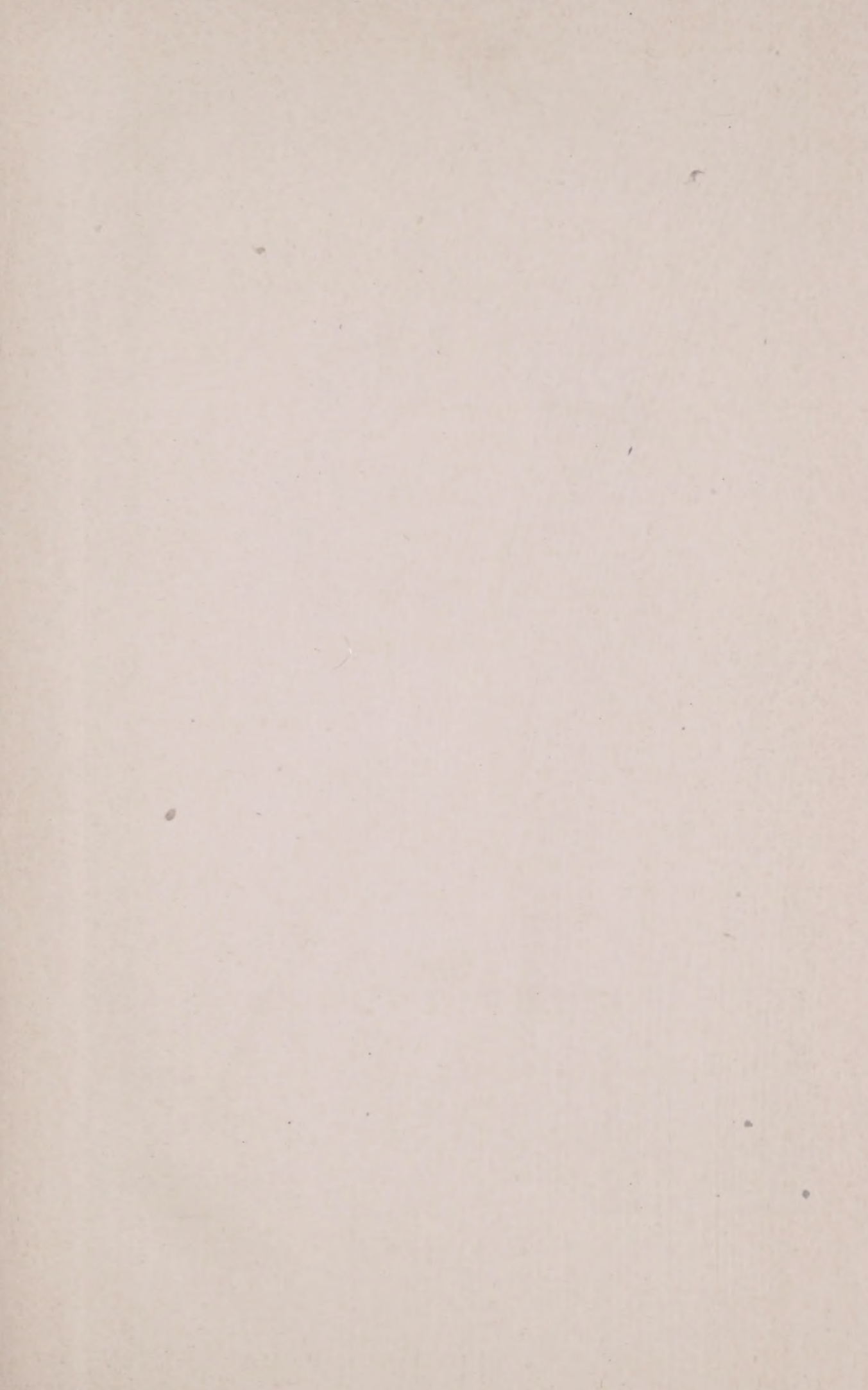
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THEY WERE BEGINNING TO FEEL VERY MUCH AT HOME ON THE GREAT
STEAMER.—Page 1.

The Helen Grant Books

HELEN GRANT'S HARVEST YEAR

BY
AMANDA M. DOUGLAS

*ILLUSTRATED BY
BERTHA DAVIDSON HOXIE*



BOSTON
LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO.

Published, August, 1911

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HELEN GRANT'S HARVEST YEAR

Norwood Press
BERWICK AND SMITH CO.
Norwood, Mass.
U. S. A.

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Helen Grant's Harvest Year

CHAPTER I

OLD FRIENDS MET TOGETHER

THEY were beginning to feel very much at home on the great steamer. It was suggestive of several things: an immense hotel, an island in the midst of the sea, a social rendezvous, where people began with a smile and a bow, and then dropped into a pleasant acquaintance, to part at the journey's end, perhaps never to meet again, but in some cases to carry away a delightful remembrance.

There were four in Mrs. Aldred's party; two English girls, whose American mother had been a warm friend of Mrs. Aldred's, and who had wanted her daughters to see something of her country, and to have her

friend's training; another pupil, whose final destination was a musical conservatory at Leipsic; and a Westchester girl who had been a day scholar in Helen's time. They had affiliated with the Gartney girls, and made an enjoyable party by themselves. The weather was perfection, and there was very little sickness, although Elma and Miss Orton suffered somewhat at first. Miss Craven proved such an excellent sailor that Helen teased her a little for her fears.

"It wasn't sea-sickness altogether. I think I founded my apprehension on the awful loneliness of the Ancient Mariner, alone on his 'wide, wide sea.'"

"And it is not a bit lonely. In fact, it is truly a great floating city."

"And we have had so many suggestive plans!" said Juliet with a sort of remote smile. "One or two years' exploring odd nooks and corners, cities, picture galleries, churches, and people even, if we could not understand their strange tongues. Just we two," and the smile deepened.

"I think I like this plan best. Then I

don't know when I could take a whole year or two, and save up sufficient money," returned Helen with a merry light in her eyes. Then she colored. She had not confessed her future to Juliet. Conscience pricked her a little since she had admitted it to her friend Mrs. Yarrow.

"As if the money would have counted," in a low tone.

Mrs. Aldred came over to them. She had found some friends, quite young people, and the girls were with them.

Helen made room for her. "We have not had a real good talk yet," she said. "Is Grace's marriage going to change—anything?"

"Do you mean the school?"

"Yes."

"Why—no," reflectively. "As the years go on I am more and more interested in young people's lives. Only they go out of yours just when the attachment seems the strongest. And some of them you never hear about again; but others, and not the most promising either, keep up the warmest remembrance.

I had a visit some months ago from Dr. Kent."

"Oh, those two women are Juliet's—shall I say?—protégées? As I remember Miss Kent, she was not a promising subject. But I *did* like Miss Logan," declared Helen.

"I am quite anxious to visit them, and think I shall take New York on my Eastern vacation. I am not going to have so large a school. A Miss Wentworth has been teaching for me during the last year and getting some training for a school of her own. She will take all the smaller scholars. Her mother will come and keep house for her. There is a need for a home-school for motherless children or orphans, and she is more fond of that work. I think I can truly recommend her. And her mother has been for two years caretaker in an institution. Do you remember the McNair house, Helen? They had some money and have bought that. So I am to take no girl under fourteen. In certain ways I am sorry, too. The little children are so in need of a friend. Grace was so fitted for that. And, Miss Craven, what a sisterly friend you have

been to those Gartney children! And generous as well!" Juliet flushed.

"Tell us about Miss Grace. Was she very much in love?" and Helen colored rosily as she glanced up.

Mrs. Aldred smiled. "Yes, I think she cared a great deal for him and the three children. I don't know how she will succeed with the boy, but the little girls are really charming. We were not thinking of such a thing. The girls came to school, and he visited us quite often. The church has improved a good deal since Mr. Danforth's time, but of course the town has widened out and brought in some fine people. But I always say that Mr. Danforth laid a good foundation. His children are doing well. You know, perhaps, that the oldest son, who is a young man to be proud of, left business, giving up a fine opportunity, and is a clergyman?"

Helen colored and merely said—"Yes."

"I hardly thought Grace would marry. She had planned to go to Florence this summer, where, according to their mother's statement, I have two lovely grandchildren," smiling a

little. "But Mr. Winson's housekeeper went away in March. He had a rather unfortunate time with incompetent help, and plead for an early marriage. A wing had been added to the parsonage, and some modern improvements put in. It wanted furnishing, of course, and Grace consented to be married the very day school closed. It was rather a surprise to everybody. I like him very much. He is only five years older than Grace, and I am truly glad to have her remain at Westchester. I think Grace will make an excellent step-mother, and a very judicious clergyman's wife. She had not planned to be married until her return in the autumn."

"Marriages do not seem to be going out of fashion in spite of all the talk," Helen said rather mirthfully.

"There are more—shall I say older marriages? Girls do not think marriage the only career, and the sensible ones do not rush into it. But I do believe marriage and motherhood make the only perfect life, when it is entered into wisely. I think very few of my girls have made fatal mistakes. Yet single women are

doing some of the world's finest work. The advance we have made is that women have found that it is not absolutely *necessary* to be married. I have been much interested in Dr. Kent and Miss Logan. Her practice is largely among children, and she really loves the poor, unfortunate little ones."

"And she has taken up another branch," said Juliet. "She finds homes for some of the poor little foundlings, after she has brought them to the point of health and strength. A comparatively rich woman has built a wing to their modest home and made a beautiful sun parlor on the second floor in memory of her little child who died. I think of all my pupils, and some of them have won fame, there is not one I am prouder of than Dr. Kent."

"And we all thought her so——" Helen paused, remembering the plain, almost ungracious girl who was so obstinately self-contained.

"Miss Logan helped. She knew Miss Kent's past. Where did *she* get her large, motherly sympathy?—not from her own mother."

"I'm not sure that virtues or vices are strictly hereditary," said Miss Craven.

Helen thought of her own case. Surely she was like neither parent. Somehow, she felt more of kin to Uncle Jason in many ways. They were prospering at Hope. Nat and his father were model farmers, Fanny was a high school graduate and had been offered a position, and her mother was really proud, though she didn't believe a school teacher could ever keep house decently. But, then, neither did Aurelia.

The girls came around presently. Then there was supper, music, and playing, dancing, promenading. It was like a ball-room on a large scale. Helen and Juliet were walking leisurely, when an acquaintance of Miss Craven's brought up a friend and introduced him as a Mr. Conrad. He took the outer edge on Helen's side; Mr. Trent caught step with Juliet. He was a New Yorker, a friend of the Travis family.

"I suppose you have crossed before?" Mr. Conrad assumed.

"No, it is my first experience."

"Was the touch of sea-sickness very horrible?"

"I wasn't sick. I didn't eat any supper, and stayed out until I was sleepy. My friend had no trouble either. Only one of our girls had a bad attack."

"You are with a party?"

"With my friend, Miss Craven. Mrs. Aldred, our matron, has several of her school-girls."

"Are you to take a run over to the Continent?"

"Not this time. The United Kingdom will be as much as we have time for, though we may have a glimpse of Paris. A two months' stay will not give time for everything."

"True. And there is a great deal to see in London, if that is what you come for."

"It would be queer to take the trouble to come and not see it," rather archly.

"Well—some people come just for the season. I know several American women who do. They have a list of dinners and balls and teas and the races. Of course they see the great buildings, and run into the House of

Lords once, and the House of Commons, if there is a great speaker. That is all they care about."

"Perhaps the first few times they take in other things."

"Perhaps so," with a little shrug.

"There is so much to see everywhere. And I haven't seen half of America yet."

"Then you really desire to *see*?"

"Why, yes," and she laughed.

"Is this your friend's first visit?"

"Yes. We have always spent part of our vacations together."

"Oh—are you college girls?"

"I am a college graduate. She has a lovely home and keeps mostly to that," Helen said stiffly.

"I have heard Trent say something about it. Rich in her own right, isn't she?"

"She has quite a fortune. But there are hundreds much larger," in a rather dry tone.

"Money is the best thing in the world. Having that you can get all else."

"Can you?" rather doubtfully. "I think there are several things money can't buy."

“That is the very young view of it. Mention some of them.”

“I’m not going to waste my choicest beliefs on you,” she said spiritedly.

“Oh,” and he laughed. “It’s rather refreshing to meet one who holds such primitive beliefs. I grew up with a few. But the exigencies of life—the hard knocks—disabuse one’s mind.”

“Oh, Helen,” said Elma Gartney, “here is some one who wants to see you, a friend of Mrs. Aldred’s. We were looking for you.”

She was surrounded by the party. Mrs. Aldred presented an elderly, distinguished-looking man as Professor Verhoeven. Mr. Conrad discreetly effaced himself. Miss Craven and Mr. Trent were not far behind.

“I met your father in Washington,” he began. “He gave a lecture, very entertaining even to a scholar on different lines. He looked very weary and delicate, but I was shocked to hear of his death so soon afterward. And I am very glad to meet you. Mrs. Aldred and I are quite old friends. But in a great cara-

vansery like this you do not meet all your acquaintances at first."

"And here is another of my pupils that I am proud of," she said, presenting Juliet. "Indeed, I sometimes feel as if I had a share in a great many lives; for though some of them may stray off, you meet many of them again, here and there."

"Yes, I find it so. I had only a brief stay in your country. I was in two courses of lectures, and then I had some engagements here—I mean in my own land," laughing. "Are any of your young ladies studying art?"

"No," rather hesitatingly.

"We are quite a practical people," interposed Helen. "Though I think Mrs. Aldred has had some geniuses on her list. But most of us are everyday folk, though we all hope to do credit to her training."

"You are not going on to the Continent? I am sorry—there is so much to see. But you can come again. I suppose England has the greater charm for you, Miss Grant?"

"Will it be clannish to admit that it has?" with an arch expression. "We are of one

blood, one language. And the history touches us more closely. Then—well I knew very little of my father; he was so long in the East, and then in the museum——”

“I considered him a fascinating speaker after he was warmed up. He made those old people stand out before you. They certainly did some wonderful things in sculpture; painting was not so truly a fine art with them, only they did have the secret of some marvelous coloring. Still, for all their glory, I would rather live to-day.”

There was the shadow of a smile playing about his mouth and showing distinctly in his blue eyes.

“Oh, I do believe we all would!” she exclaimed earnestly. Then her thoughts went back to the dread of her father, that she could never dismiss. How intensely she had shrunk from those years of companionship! “There is so much—the riches of all the ages and that of to-day!”

“You have never taken up art work? You look as if you might do a little in that line.”

“But, you see, I should want to do a great

deal; to be truly inspired. Painting a few flowers or a bit of landscape wouldn't satisfy me. I can do that. But to paint character in a face; the real meaning, that talks——"

"And you've never made yourself unhappy over it?" There was a touch of admiration in his face. Hers was aglow with resolution, satisfaction.

"Well—I was poor. I couldn't afford the long training even if I'd had the genius. And I loved to study other things. I resolved to teach. And I like teaching very much. I went to Mrs. Aldred's. Have you known her long?"

"I knew the daughter first. She paints children charmingly. I first saw her mother in her studio. And we have met here and there, every time she has been abroad. She is a fine, wholesome woman, a friendly woman. I should expect her to train girls admirably. And you were right not to waste your time on something you could not do. Do you think I am an artist, a painter?"

There was a sense of amusement lurking in his face. It was a foreign one, not of the

French or Italian type; fair, frank, blue-eyed, yet with a strong, discriminating expression.

"Oh, I know you are not." She laughed softly. "Your tone confesses it."

"No, I could never paint a fine picture, though I come of an artistic family. And I learned that appreciation was needed as well as the science of the brush. There must be critics; not those who pick to pieces and destroy, but those who can see the soul that inspires the artist as he makes it visible to the world. So you may call me a connoisseur. I studied and have made myself an authority. It needs taste, judgment, the inner sight, the *true* sight—and experience. Then I lecture. I purchase paintings for patrons. I *do* occasionally unearth a genius and that delights me. So that is what takes me about the world so much. But I don't give every one my history."

He laughed charmingly, melodiously, and she was curiously won by his frankness—his almost youthful gayety.

"I should like to go through a fine picture gallery with you," she said. "But I shouldn't

dare make a comment until I had studied your face."

"There are some people with fine taste, who do not like anything that does not appeal to the heart. We are not all made alike. And I think it is better to have the inner sense touched and awakened than to run in the ordinary groove of appreciation. I shall be in Paris from the middle to the last of August. You will go over, of course, if you only stay a few days. I must talk to Mrs. Aldred about it."

They were walking by themselves. It was a glorious, starlight night, the young moon having already disappeared. The two young men had joined the girls, and were sending gay bits of chat back and forth, laughing and jesting. Presently they saw a circle of vacant seats and accepted the wordless invitation.

"If any one comes and looks sharply at at us we will rise at once with the humblest apologies," said Mr. Conrad. "Don't some of you ladies want to dance?"

"I've been dying to," returned Miss Rosenberg. "Why, it is like a great beautiful ball!

I don't wonder people, women, like to go back and forth. It is fascinating, enchanting!"

She half rose.

"I am at your service," announced Mr. Conrad, and they walked away together.

"He is very entertaining," remarked Wilma. "Didn't you like him, cousin Helen?"

Helen had thought him rather impertinent, but she did not say so just now. She experienced a curious exhilaration, the scene altogether was so fascinating and the music soul-stirring. Why, just crossing the ocean had a charm!

Juliet and Mr. Trent were having a discussion on the wants and woes of the great city, and the lavish ways of spending money.

Carl Verhoeven had seated himself by Mrs. Aldred, and he was planning how they might meet in Paris. The girls were chatting. Miss Orton wished she were with the dancers. Why hadn't she spoken up?

"I'm not sure about these things, just what is proper," said Edith Foxcroft. "And then—there was only one attendant—what did that amount to among so many?"

"We might get up and dance by ourselves. We had to be beaux at Mrs. Aldred's."

"Will you be glad when you are really at—home?" queried Elma.

"Oh, I liked everything so much. But then—we have not seen mother and father and Jack and Aunt Netta for almost a year. I was awfully homesick at first. You know we had not been to boarding school, only just as day scholars. Mrs. Aldred is lovely. You were there, Miss Grant?"

"Yes, and then I could not go back the next year; my father, who had been away for years, came home, but he was in very poor health and died. Then I went back and fitted for college."

"Oh, I'd like to go to college," said Edith. "I've read lots of stories about college girls. You don't really have to be anything because you go, do you?"

"Why, no, if you mean a profession."

"Well, I shouldn't want to teach. I suppose I'll begin to go out with mother. But you American girls go out so much by yourselves; and some of them have lots of fun.

Oh, I suppose Miss Rosenberg is having a grand good time!"

Miss Rosenberg had said once to her escort, "Don't you think we ought to go back to the others?"

"Well—if you are tired of me, I suppose I ought to ask some of the others. You all dance?"

"Oh, yes. And I could dance all night."

So they went on for an hour. She did dance well, and was loath to give up. She had graduated, so she really was not to be amenable to Mrs. Aldred in everything.

Helen had told Mrs. Aldred some of her trials and perplexities, and that now they had the high school on a firm footing. The coming year they expected to do very well.

There had been occasional letters, to be sure, but one could not jot down everything. And now she told about her proffer from Miss Hamilton, and her plans; the very kindly letters that had passed between them; and her friend Mrs. Yarrow's interest—disappointment, as well.

Mrs. Aldred was silent for some seconds. Helen glanced up.

"My dear, it was a most excellent offer, I think. If one could be quite sure this Miss Hamilton would be an agreeable person. It was very tempting. I hardly see how you had the courage to refuse. Didn't it tempt you?"

Helen colored a little. The possible lover, then, had been an obstacle that she could not confess.

"But I did want to bring the classes up and have one fine graduation. Then it would have been a bitter disappointment to Mr. Underwood, who had been most kind and thoughtful to me. You see, some of the little towns around thought we didn't need a high school. The county did not, but Mr. Hildreth's offer was too good to refuse. Now, at least after this year, I shall have a most excellent standing. I have succeeded with some very troublesome boys, and at first I thought I should not like big boys."

"Perhaps it was as well to remain. Helen, I think you have proved yourself a born teacher. I look to see you fill some high posi-

tion yet. So many of my girls have been an honor and a delight to me."

"You were always so kind and judicious."

Helen turned her face a little aside, for she could not keep the warm color out of it. But neither could she confess the new plan for her life. It looked curiously strange to her now.

She had not even confessed it to Juliet, and she felt that was a positive wrong to her friend. But by great good luck, Miss Craven thought, they had secured a double stateroom. With the two young girls there, no opportunity had offered for that sort of confidence. And there were all the others—the friends they were making, every day some new one. The Professor haunted them, Mr. Trent haunted Juliet, Mr. Conrad was a sort of general admirer, and the young girls were a merry, well-behaved company. They could not have been otherwise, after Mrs. Aldred's training.

When they steamed into Liverpool, Helen looked on in sheer amazement. It was so un-American. There were good-bys, Mr. Trent's rather brusque, Helen thought. And there

were Mr. and Mrs. Foxcroft come to meet their two darlings. It was quite a party to go up to London. The Foxcrofts were at Bayswater and were fain to take in most of the party. An old music teacher was to meet Miss Rosenberg in London and convoy her to Leipsic; Mrs. Aldred had telegraphed to a pleasant, home-like hotel, where they could be comfortable until plans were perfected. Therefore they promised to visit Bayswater in a few days, when other arrangements had been settled.

CHAPTER II

A FLOCK OF GIRLS

AFTER Miss Rosenberg was started on her journey with Fraulein Amberg, Mrs. Aldred, the two girls, and Ruth Orton settled comfortably in the hotel where Miss Craven's party had two nice rooms. The girls had a room with a big bed, Helen and Juliet a double-bedded apartment. How plain it all seemed after the luxury of the steamer!

"But you will find everything clean, the meals good, and the service quite admirable. There are small dining-rooms for private parties," said Mrs. Aldred.

"How queer everything looks!" exclaimed Elma. "It is really London, I suppose."

"It really is," returned Mrs. Aldred with a smile. "But we could have noise and bustle if we chose. I am sure we have had considerable of it."

"That is what makes it feel strange. Why, it is as quiet as at Westchester or at home."

They had slept late, wearied by the fatigue and excitement. Now there was a plain breakfast, daintily served, then letters were brought in. There were several for Mrs. Aldred, two for Helen, and a like number for Juliet.

Helen flushed a little over hers, but Juliet was so occupied with the news of the two days at home without her that she could not study her friend. Everything was going on well under Mrs. Howard's careful administrations, but baby Theo had been much disappointed not to find Auntie Jue when she woke up, and insisted that she must come home at night.

"We must make definite plans," said Mrs. Aldred. "Of course we have talked over what we want to see, but days go by so swiftly! There must be a little shopping, at first, since we did not overburden ourselves with the articles we could get quite as cheaply here, and if we wear them we won't have to pay duty on them when we return. I've been looking that up. We all know that most travelers take

twice what they need, and I have learned it by experience."

They glanced over the morning paper, afterward returning to their rooms, which had been put in order, and began unpacking a little. Then Mrs. Foxcroft was announced.

There was a small sitting-room with the suite. Mrs. Aldred went at once.

"I know I shall take you by surprise, and that you ought to have a day to collect yourselves. But an hour ago a messenger came from old friends of the girls, wanting to know if they could come over in the afternoon to give them a welcome home. They were so anxious to see them. I meant, when we could arrange it, to give a sort of garden party, and ask in all the old acquaintances; but the girls thought this welcome so nice that we fell into the plan at once. It will be very informal; just a plain tea-drinking and a good deal of talk. And they want Mrs. Aldred and the rest of you. Now I've come with the family carriage, prepared to drive you out, the girls insisting that there shall be no refusal. They have talked so much of their mates and com-

panions! My dear Mrs. Aldred, I come charged with no end of thanks from Mr. Foxcroft, who is delighted to find them so improved and yet so little changed. And we want a real visit from you and your friends."

The twins glanced up eagerly. This morning they had been strangers in a strange land.

"I hardly know," began Mrs. Aldred.

"Oh, Edith charged me to take no denial. They want to show their American friends. I know it seems rather out of order, but we do these things sometimes," with a smile.

"I can see how they wish for Mrs. Aldred and the girls," said Juliet in an explanatory tone, "and I am going to propose that you take the four back with you, while Miss Grant and I wait for the 'real visit.' I have letters to write."

"Oh! that is much better," exclaimed Helen. "You know, Mrs. Foxcroft, *we* have passed out of the region of girlhood, though it will be a pleasant sight to see the flock of girls making welcome their old friends. It is very kind of you to include us."

"It would be a greater pleasure to have you

to ourselves; the girls are very enthusiastic over Miss Grant. Can't we plan for the visit next week? And have the garden party while you are there."

Mrs. Foxcroft was so sincerely cordial that there was no refusal possible. Helen had admired her the day before.

So it was settled, even the day being appointed for the visit, which was to include the night and the following day. Then Mrs. Aldred and Juliet went to help the girls, who were in a state of delight. Helen and Mrs. Foxcroft improved the time, getting better acquainted and talking of the sights of London. And then the party went down to the carriage. Mrs. Foxcroft was driving.

The two friends were silent for several moments, then Helen, coming back to the table with her portfolio, said:—

"You settled that very nicely, Juliet. I was trying to think of something graceful and decisive to say."

"They will be young girls, schoolgirls together. I was glad in one way——"

"It is queer how little we have been alone.

There is so much to talk over." She colored at her own share. "Juliet, do you like that Mr. Trent? It seemed to me he was very much interested in you."

"We have been friends for some time. Mr. Osborne seems to have an excellent opinion of him as a business man. He has done some very kindly things in ways that he doesn't believe in at all. It is comparatively easy to give money when you have it—especially if you want to win the favor of another."

"Yet I sometimes thought—he *does* care for you."

"Nonsense, Helen. He is about ready to marry, but he is not going to throw himself away. Men are often quite as exigent, perhaps I should say calculating, as women."

"But don't you mean ever——"

There was a momentary silence.

"I haven't any special meaning," returned Juliet. "I like my life very much. I can do many of the things that interest me. I have a lovely mother-friend, I have two charming younger sisters and Theo. There are girls that one can help so much; sometimes rescue

from a hard, uncongenial life. One came to me in the spring, whose mother was making her life miserable by trying to force her into a distasteful marriage. The firm she had been working for had failed, and it was hard to find a new place. She was a really superior girl, nice mannered and all that. Her mother drank, that was one trouble. The lover, a middle-aged man, had the same weakness. After a few weeks, her mother gave her the choice to shift for herself or marry and step into a comfortable home. Her mother would have planted herself on her. She came to me in her trouble, and I took her in. I do understand that nice, self-respecting girls do not like to go into the rank of servants. I had her with me three weeks, when a charming woman, lame from a sad accident, wanted a sort of companion daughter. She had a pretty home in the suburbs and kept a maid. I sent my girl to her, and they took a great liking to each other. Mrs. Marsh is in comfortable circumstances. She lost two children just as they were growing up, and is very glad to have Margaret; and the girl is most grateful. The

rather funny upshot of it is that her mother married the lover. I only hope they will keep away from Margaret, though the matter was explained to Mrs. Marsh, and she will befriend her. Helen, I think I was meant for a philanthropist, and that was why God gave me all the money. Mr. Trent doesn't believe in wasting your substance in this fashion. He thinks I need a husband to help me save it. He has some engaging qualities, but I like my own way and my freedom best. Yet I hope I never shall antagonize any true marriage. I think it is best for most women, even if it does not reach the highest ideal. But—why should I give up my freedom for the ordinary love? There are many fine single women who are doing a good work in the world. I sometimes think of my poor mother's life. And what kind of a husband would my queer old uncle have made?"

"A homily on marriage," and Helen laughed.

"I don't often talk about it. But I want you to marry. You ought to be the mother of a family, or the president of a college. If you

had been seven or eight years older, I should have liked you to accept that Western proffer."

"Mrs. Aldred thinks I should have done so."

Both glanced up and their eyes met. Helen's face was scarlet. Then she came around and clasped her arms about Juliet's neck and laid her hot cheek against the cool one.

"I've been—well, not exactly deceitful—but lacking in sincerity; only there has seemed no opportunity; and it was so sudden to me. Yet it seemed the very thing that I should have desired if I had ever thought of it in that way——"

Her voice was tremulous.

"My dear, I guessed. It was the farewell on the vessel. And I knew you did not want to spoil the sacredness of the joy. What is friendship for but to trust?"

"You are a very sweet and comforting friend. I don't think there will ever be any one good enough for you. But I knew you would not accept Mr. Trent. Seriously, Juliet, how many of them have there been?"

"I don't believe any rich woman need go

single. And I think most women have an opportunity to marry some one. But about you! I have always liked Gordon Danforth. It was noble in him to give up his college plans to help with the younger children; and I suppose he might have been in the way of making a fortune, if he had kept at business."

"There is so much more for you to hear. One thing is that Mr. Hildreth knew him and admired him. Sometime I will tell you about it. But—I would like to be free to do something for myself; to be the college president if I had the chance. I think I must be ambitious for something beyond mere salary. There are so many splendid things to life!"

"But you must not let them stand in the way of happiness."

"I really have not seen so much of the splendid side, of the grand men and women, and the great work that is being done. I do want, sometime, to be really in and of it; but it does not often come to early youth. Oh, I must read my letters," and she blushed. Did ever a girl leave her first love letter unopened so long?

“And I must write. I am glad to have this quiet day to ourselves.”

Helen went over to the window. And she read Mr. Hildreth's letter first. It contained two letters of introduction that he hoped she would send to the persons to whom they were addressed, and one was to a titled lady.

Why was she not in a mood to be rapturous over this other letter? She had been almost swept off her feet, she said to herself more than once, like any romantic girl of sixteen. And the betrothal had been such a solemn thing to her, full of touching sweetness. Was the girl who had stood in Mr. Hildreth's library and received his blessing, *herself*? What had opened this new life before her? She had said more than once that she was not a worshipful girl. Yes, she *was* glad this great joy had come to her, but she wanted to put it off a little, to get used to it.

There were many things she could write about; they were new to her, but he had seen them and could appreciate all. So, busy with their letters, they both were surprised when lunch time came. Juliet had written quite a

pile. Helen would write to friends by and by, when she had seen more and done more.

It was mid-afternoon, and they were talking of taking a survey of their small corner of the city, when the maid came up with a card on which was a penciled line: "As their mutual friend, Mrs. Aldred, was not in, would the ladies see Sir Charles Waring, who was the bearer of many messages to the party?"

"Ought we?" asked Helen. "We shall have to learn the proprieties."

"I wish Mrs. Aldred were in. Why—if it were not proper, I think he would not ask it."

"Won't it be awkward to introduce ourselves?" and Helen laughed. "A titled call. Why, it is quite an adventure."

They went down to the drawing-room. The man who was standing by the window turned. He had a fresh, fair, cordial face, though he had passed the half century mark. He expressed Helen's ideal of an Englishman of the educated and well-bred type; the father of a family, prosperous, happy, content. It showed in every feature and lurked in rather merry blue eyes.

"Must I apologize? I think this is Miss Grant. I have heard so much about you and your friend Miss Craven. Mrs. Aldred has been our guest for two successive years, and Lady Waring insisted that I should come over at once and see what your arrangements are, and whether I can be of assistance to you. When will Mrs. Aldred return? From her note, I felt sure of seeing her."

"A friend, whose two girls had been at her school, came for her this morning and would take no denial. There was to be a sort of welcome from old friends. She cannot be home until evening," explained Miss Craven.

"I suppose you have plans and plans. Of course you want to see all London. Do you know—will Mrs. Aldred go to Italy to her daughter's?"

"I think not. I believe Mr. and Mrs. Valatin are to meet us in Paris, where we go for the last few days. We and three others are the tourists this time, and Mrs. Aldred has kindly taken us in charge. My friend and I were among the pupils of other days. And

there are three younger ones in the party," explained Helen.

"Yes, I hoped to see you all. We have been delightful friends. If I had any young people, girls, I should like to send them to her. We had a houseful once. Five are married, and now there are only three at home. They are quite scattered. One son and daughter are in Canada; one son is in Egypt; one son and daughter settled near us; one daughter and two boys are at home. So at times we are glad to call in friends to make merry, as in the old days."

"But we would be such a crowd," Helen said mirthfully. Then she colored. Did he really mean to include all of them?

Sir Charles was quite delightful. There were so many things to see in London, and the suburbs were quite as enticing. They lived up in Suffolk, where the family had taken root over two hundred years ago. There were many important points around them, short, delightful journeys. They must surely see his section of the country. How bright and chatty he was; it really seemed as if they had known

him a long while, instead of a scant hour. He was to make some stay in London, and would come in, the next morning, to plan with Mrs. Aldred; and he hoped to be of some service in showing them about.

They thanked him most cordially.

“If that is a specimen Englishman, I am sure I shall like them,” said Helen. “And our first guest—shall I call him *ours*?—was a titled one. Think of that! A baronet, I suppose.”

“That is an hereditary title, I believe. Isn’t it odd how English families scatter about? Two married and in Canada, and a son in Egypt. Do you know, I should like to go to Egypt—that strange, weird, ancient country. But all of the East is wonderful. I am not surprised that it bewitches students.”

They had a dainty tea in their own sitting-room. Then there was a long confidence that drew the friends closer together. It was nine when the rest of the party returned.

“Such a splendid time, Aunt Jue, and some of the nicest girls! They were so glad to get Edith and Janet home. Only the house is so odd,—with queer passages and nooks, and the

garden has a great, high brick wall around it. But the vines and the flowers! Oh, dear! I'm tired through and through," and Wilma dropped down on the lounge.

"And we had a titled visitor. He was sorry to miss you, but he is coming in the morning. Here is his card," and Helen handed it to her friend, whose face was alight with pleasure.

"Oh, that was delightful of him. When I wrote, I did not think of going to the Foxcrofts. Yes, I had told him a good deal about my girls, especially you, Helen. He is one of the charming men who take a great interest in girls, and wishes he had six instead of three. I shall be glad for you all to meet him."

"Then he isn't like the father in Miss Broughton's novel, 'who danced on the bills and made himself generally a tyrant!' We shall have to remodel our opinions of English fathers. Or is it that you have picked out the very nicest ones during your sojourns?"

Mrs. Aldred gave an amused laugh. "Of course I knew Mrs. Foxcroft long ago, before her marriage. The first time I came over, I

visited her and was much pleased with her husband and really charmed with their hospitality. Although Mr. Foxcroft has large manufacturing interests, he is better read than many of our men of the same class at home. Men here are taking a great deal of interest in the government, and keep themselves better informed. There is not so much change here. I want you both to see him, them, and the old house that they have beautified without spoiling it. But Sir Charles is on quite a different line. They are living not far from Sudbury. The Grange is a lovely old place, with cottages, peasants, and an ivy-covered stone church; a bit of rural England still, near to many places of interest, and, as you see, not far from London. I do believe you will have to visit them."

"Oh! dear, we didn't consider visits. And there is Scotland and the Emerald Isle. I ought to go and kiss the Blarney stone. I sometimes think I am too direct. School-ma'ams are apt to get that way," laughed Helen gayly.

"They count on us all for the garden party,"

said Wilma. "I want to take some nice English ways home with me. Though I didn't see that the Foxcroft girls were much different, and they were not at all pretentious. I liked that. And they never grumbled about rules."

"We must all go to bed," said Juliet. "Time has not hung heavily on our hands, but it seems a long while since morning."

They were up betimes the next morning, and had their first mail. There were many things to talk over; guide-books to study, journeys to plan.

"One thing I am resolved to do is the British Museum," announced Helen. "I can't imagine what father would have done with me. We should have lived in lodgings, I suppose, and I would have spent my time copying or deciphering. And not a real girl friend! I've had such a happy time at Westfield, teaching, though at first there were some infelicities," and she drew her face in a funny expression. "I *am* fond of folks, and I don't want them all alike, either."

"And Westminster Abbey, and the palaces, and the historic streets and places where noted

people lived! Why, we could spend our two months in London alone," exclaimed Juliet. "Oh, I don't wonder people come and come again."

Then Sir Charles was announced.

He entered with an old friend's delight, and met the young girls with a charming cordiality that won them at once. He was the bearer of messages from Lady Waring, which included the whole party in a week-end visit. Since their stay was limited, could they not come tomorrow and stay until Monday? No other visitors were expected.

"But——" Mrs. Aldred looked aghast. "What! all of us?"

"Of course. Why should we make fish of one and fowl of the other? You couldn't leave the young ladies behind."

There was such a merry, persuasive light playing about his face that no one could doubt his sincerity. He seemed to enjoy the sort of consternation with which they glanced at one another.

"We are hardly prepared——"

"As if we expected all manner of spic-and-

span adornments from tourists! Bessy, oddly enough, is all curiosity to see the young girls. We know so much of Mrs. Aldred's family," turning to the younger member of the flock.

"Bessy" meant Elizabeth, the eldest daughter. The two others had married young. She had had a rather pathetic romance, interrupted by death, and had become her mother's companion.

"Well—shall we consider that as settled? You will have Friday morning to get your fallals ready. There will be no young gentlemen but my own two boys. Perhaps it will hardly be gay enough," and there was a lurking shade of mischief in his eyes.

"Oh, we have not come on an expedition merely for gayeties or fun," returned Helen. "Wasn't it Bulwer who wrote, 'My Novel, or the Varieties of English Life'? We want to see the varieties so we can discuss them intelligently when we return home. Though I do not think I shall write a book until my next visit."

There was such a charming mock-seriousness in this that he studied her in some doubt.

"You are most kind to take us all, in this fashion. I don't just know what is proper to say. After we have been in Scotland, and have interviewed Ireland's treasure, the Blarney stone, we may be better prepared."

"We are not going to wait. You will be so full of reminiscences and descriptions that the real *you* will be far out of sight. We want to take the American freshness."

Mrs. Aldred felt that as there were to be no other guests it would not prove embarrassing. Lady Waring was a delightful hostess, she knew.

So that was decided. He would be in for them at two the next afternoon.

"And now what are you to do to-day? Can I be of any service to you? There are the picture galleries——"

"The Museum is my first desire. Is it very far? and is there much of what is called 'red tape' about it? I have a particular wish to see the Oriental Department."

"This is one of the days. We were speaking of something Mrs. Aldred told us last summer; that your father was an

Oriental scholar. Yes, it will be interesting to you."

"I suppose there are other Departments," said Miss Orton. "I do not think I am up in those learned matters. Oh, yes," looking over the guide-book, "there are Greek and Roman rooms, and pictures and statuary, and the Elgin marbles—and ever so many things to attract the unlearned."

"I remember asking my father," said Wilma, "what 'the marbles' were. It was a long time ago, and the only marbles I knew were what we used in playing a game on a board, and I thought that must be a wrong name."

Sir Charles laughed.

They made ready, Mrs. Aldred really glad to have an escort.

"We don't look quite so much like a Cook party," said Helen. "Yet we have two teachers."

The younger girls watched everything with eager eyes. "Though I do believe I would much rather have gone shopping," declared Miss Orton. "I've done the Metropolitan Museum no end of times."

CHAPTER III

WHAT THE DAY BROUGHT

THEY were awed by the magnificent stretch of buildings which occupied the place of what had once been the Montague House, whose collection had begun one hundred and fifty odd years before. It had been rebuilt on a much larger scale and added to by generous donors. They seemed almost lost within, though there were other visitors; but the spaces were so large, and there were so many of them.

Sir Charles thought they had better go to the North Gallery first, and then to the Assyrian Saloon, where the pictures and tablets told a coherent story. It was an extensive, glass-roofed hall with a gallery round it. Here were reliefs and tablets from the time of Assurpanipal, Senacherib; scenes of war, bringing in captives, banqueting with musicians and courtiers and slaves in throngs about, many

of them on their knees in attitudes of the most abject humility. How it brought back that old summer!

The custodian came and spoke to Sir Charles.

"I should like to introduce you to Miss Grant, whose father was employed here some years ago. He was an Oriental scholar—a translator—do you call it?—of those curious old languages written on stone."

"Miss Grant! Yes, I recall the Professor. He did us a great service, in discovering a key whereby some of the cylinders could be read. And we were most sorry to lose him, though the doctor had insisted that he should leave his work and take a journey somewhere. We have many of his treasures. And I am very happy to have you visit us, Miss Grant. Will you come and see the room where he worked? He was most neat and methodical."

They entered a narrow passageway from which two rooms opened. A man was busy in one. In the other, a few things were piled up on the table and rows of shelves were full. One window lighted it, supplemented by numbers of gas burners. Here was where he had

sat, wearing out his poor eyes, taxing his nerves, relinquishing his love for his kind, in the fascinating pursuit of the doings of those who had lived and died centuries ago. The quick tears came to Helen's eyes.

But she was glad to hear him praised and to know that he had been appreciated. Perhaps he had not cared for human love. She pitied her poor mother, but why did she marry a scholar!

"How strange it all seems," said Juliet as they turned away. "Suppose you had been compelled to come!"

"It would have been but for a brief while. I am glad he could end his life among friends, and be buried with mother. Let us go to some brighter curiosities. Those old nations seem so cruel to me."

They rejoined the others, and found many choice and wonderful things.

"One wants days and days to see even the half of them. I always find something new in our own museum," said Juliet. "I wonder if in a hundred or so years we shall have anything like this?"

"They are making some remarkable discoveries of prehistoric people in our own country and in Central America. How many nations have passed away! And in many instances their histories are lost. 'They had their day and ceased to be.' "

"Have you any idea of the time?" asked Sir Charles. "And it is quite possible that you young people are suffering from the pangs of hunger and heroically concealing it. Now we must go and have some luncheon. Then we will have an omnibus ride around the city."

Mrs. Aldred thought they had better return to their lodgings, but she was overruled. The girls declared they *were* hungry. Sir Charles knew of a very nice place.

"I hope it is real English," said Helen. "We have been American all our lives, and now we want to take the color of the country."

They had a table to themselves in a cozy corner, and the cold roast and the chicken were undeniably good. They had a merry time over their meal, and it seemed as if they must have known Sir Charles for years.

The omnibus ride was delightful, though the

streets were so full that Helen wondered how they could pick their way in and out, and why pedestrians were not run over. At last they reached home.

"I have had a most enjoyable time with you all," he said, "and thank you for the pleasure. Now you will remember to let nothing happen; not a headache or a toothache must interfere. At two, precisely, you may look for me."

"I hardly know how to thank you," said Mrs. Aldred.

"Don't. That would spoil it all," he laughed.

"Isn't he just splendid!" exclaimed Elma. "Why, I feel as if I had gained a new uncle. But I know I shall be afraid of Lady Waring. And I wish there was a real *young* girl."

"Lady Waring is very sweet and affable. You were not afraid of Mrs. Foxcroft!"

"But we had known the girls for so long. Mr. Foxcroft isn't as jolly as Sir Charles, but he is very pleasant."

"I'm just tired to death!" exclaimed Miss Orton, "and I'm going for a rest."

"Oh, Mrs. Aldred, what must we have to wear?" asked Helen. "Can we wear the same frock three times to dinner? You know you stipulated that we should take as little luggage as possible."

"We shall have some time to shop tomorrow morning. And as we are tourists, not much is expected of us."

"Oh, I do hope that before we go home some one will ask us to a high-up function where there will be titled people and gorgeous gowns," said Wilma. "Do you know any such people, dear Mrs. Aldred?" in a very entreating tone.

"Oh, Wilma!" reproved Miss Craven.

"I have made a few choice friends over here, but I am not hand and glove with the aristocracy."

The girl sighed in mock disappointment, but Mrs. Aldred gave an amused smile. Then tea was sent up. They were all rather tired, but Juliet and Helen could not forbear talking over old times.

Helen, Juliet, and Mrs. Aldred went out for the shopping. The girls were promised a day at the beautiful stores, "only we *must* take up

the habit of saying 'shops,' " was the suggestion.

" But I think 'stores' sounds prettier."

Their luggage was packed and they were all ready when Sir Charles came. He expressed himself delighted that there was not an 'ache' among them.

A short railway journey, then, at the station, the family carriage, and Miss Elizabeth in the two-seated surrey. She alighted and came to be introduced to them. A fair, pleasant-looking girl, young for her eight-and-twenty years, neither exactly pretty nor really plain, but with a very sweet voice.

" These are the twins," she said, " but you are not quite alike. It is very perplexing to have so strong a resemblance that you cannot be told apart. We have two boy cousins that still puzzle me. And what pranks they used to play on every one! Will you both ride with me? "

They were very willing to. And it was a lovely drive, through a beautiful country, where estates were still large enough to have quite extensive grounds. They passed a fine

old church and a pretty, modern chapel, and then some half-embowered houses that seemed hidden away. Then they turned into a drive bordered by grand old trees, and here, on a slight elevation, stood the Grange, in all its bravery of points and ells and bow-windows and turrets. Several of the Warings had added to it, so it was not all of one style of architecture. There was a generous porch running across the front, partly shaded by vines. Easy-chairs, hammocks, and, at one end, a tea-table. Great urns of blooming flowers stood here and there.

Lady Waring advanced and greeted Mrs. Aldred cordially, and was then made acquainted with the younger members of the party. Were they not very tired after their journey? Would they sit and rest awhile before going to their rooms? She was very glad they could come in such a party. Sir Charles was so fond of young people, and they had so few now.

The tea came in, and was handed around. Elizabeth went from one to another with the grace of cordiality.

"I should think people would get tired of drinking so much tea," said Miss Orton, in the lowest of tones, to Helen. "At home we think it spoils the complexion, dries up your blood, and makes you yellow. Miss Waring is as fresh as a just opened lily. How do they keep so?"

The two elder ladies were having a delightfully informal chat, bringing Miss Craven into it. Then, presently, they were convoyed to their rooms, which were quite by themselves in a modern wing of the building.

"And to think," began Wilma in a joyous tone, "we have been taken up by the aristocracy at once. Sir Charles is just lovely, and doesn't make you feel a bit afraid."

"Not very high in the aristocratic world," said Miss Orton. "I doubt if it is the pathway to the Queen."

"I'm going to leave that for the next visit," laughed the girl. "I can't take in everything. Oh, Mrs. Aldred, you are real splendid to know so many nice people and give us a share of them," catching the lady's hand with an ardent pressure.

At dinner, the last born of the household made his appearance; a tall, well-grown young fellow of nineteen, who favored his father; though in the presence of this bevy of girls he let his father take the lead in entertaining. Elizabeth and her mother were charming. Afterward they adjourned to the beautiful, fragrant porch and talked over plans. The County Cricket Club was to have a match tomorrow at ten. There were not many entertainments at this season, except driving about.

"I think I have never seen cricket played," said Helen. "We run to lawn tennis."

"It's hardly worth inviting one to see," said the young fellow apologetically. "Only, the drive is fine. You see, they are a young club and need sharp training. You should be in London when the Eton and Harrows play, or for the Oxford and Cambridge matches. Why, you ought to have a good month in London, there is so much going on."

"I'd like to have a year," returned Helen.

Frank Waring came around and sat on the step, where he could see the faces of the group. The Gartney girls were very sweet-looking and

young. At nineteen, he felt somewhat afraid of girls. Miss Grant had a certain friendliness in her easy manner. He wondered if it came from college training, for it suggested two other girls—the only ones he was at all familiar with.

They decided to go over to Broughton the next morning, even if they did not understand the game, but Frank made some lucid explanations. They all knew tennis; at Miss Craven's there was a fine ground, where they played during summer holidays. Then followed a talk about Kingsland Manor and their school days at Mrs. Aldred's.

Broughton cricket grounds were in fine order. There were seats around, and the match called out the better class of residents, who greeted Miss Waring cordially. Frank found seats for his party and introduced them to a number of people, among them two of the players and several other young men, drawn thither by the pleasure of meeting newcomers—American girls at that. Then the call was made, the wickets were in order, and the men took their places.

"Here is a sort of guide, though I suppose you won't understand the terms. Bess will explain some of them. Harlan is a good cricket player," laughing. "He's played in some of the matches. I wish he was here. You see he is more used to—to—well, this sort of thing than I. Well, he's almost three years older,—let's hope, wiser," with a lifting of the brows. "Hello! Oh, I say, Bess, there are the Hallet girls. Can't you make room for them here?"

He was off like a flash, and returned with two tall, fair, decidedly English-looking girls, plainly dressed but with a certain style about them of the more intellectual order; Miss Hallet and Miss Maud Hallet, whom Bessy welcomed with great cordiality.

"Mother insisted upon our coming over. She thought we might meet some friends, and we had hardly left the smoke of our own chimney since our return. Maud has only a month, and she ought to be bottling up fresh air for the next year. How lovely everything is! And when you think of the city—well, of course there are some compensations."

Helen had made room beside herself. Maud was on the other hand of Elizabeth. A young man was standing in front of the others, keeping up a lively conversation with Miss Orton.

Miss Elinor Hallet answered Miss Waring's inquiries. Her father was a little weaker; she could see that he had failed since Easter. Mother was quite well. Father slept a good deal, and that gave her mother more chance for rest. Then she should be here until September 20th. Yet she gave a little sigh.

"You two ought to slip easily into reminiscences," declared Frank. "You are both college girls."

They looked at each other and smiled.

"I'm a Girton. I believe we girls are unduly proud of that."

"Oh, I am very glad to meet you," and Helen clasped the offered hand. "We are always interested in the fame of that institution. I know of several who have come over for a degree. I had an offer at once to teach in a very select boarding school—that was two years ago."

"And as soon as I was graduated, I taught

in a high school. I like teaching. Only my scholars have not been of the highest order, but they improve," with an odd accent. "I wonder how many girls go to study! They are proud of the name and standing of their school. Their mothers wish them to be accomplished on certain lines. They hope to marry, after a year or so of society."

"There are in America so many girls and women who are dependent on their own exertions. I suppose there are some here?"

"Every year, more. We are in prosaic times; the romantic era has passed. I wonder what the upshot will be? It is so different from our mothers' early days."

"But life is broader," said Helen. "And more interesting."

"Perhaps so," rather reluctantly. "Are you interested in the new movement?"

"For what? There are so many things."

"The woman's movement—suffrage."

"It is talked about a great deal," returned Helen. "I do not think we are in as dead earnest about it as you are. Do you——" then she paused.

“I don’t quite see the good of it all. Yet there are some splendid women in it. I think it requires a good deal of education and experience to understand well. And, you see, men do not agree as to what is best for the country—for the times. In our seminary it is tabooed. The girls are supposed to be fitted for future wives and mothers. And it is refreshing, sometimes, to steal out and hear the other side. The suffragists, like the men, do not always agree on the panacea. Yet there are some lecturers that carry you right along and almost convince you that their way would bring about the millennium. I met one about Easter time who quite bewildered me. Oddly enough, she is American born; a fine, strong woman about at middle life, who has taken several degrees and can earn money easily. A Miss Trevor. You may have seen her name. She created quite a stir.”

“Miss Trevor!” It called up old remembrances. Helen knit her brows for a moment. Oh—at her first college year—her room-mate, Miss Grace Trevor. Then she gave a little laugh. “Miss Marian Trevor?”

Miss Hallet nodded.

"It is funny," said Helen, "often you meet some one who knows the same person some friend of yours knows. That isn't very clearly expressed. The Miss Trevor I knew about visited her brother's family—nice, lovable people, I think, satisfied to remain in what is called the commonplace round,—very fond of each other and very helpful with each other. She resolved that a niece should have the higher education, and arranged to send her to college. She was my room-mate. And she had a lover that her aunt scouted utterly. Don't you think there are some pint measures that never can be made to hold a quart? Some very positive people insist in pressing it down. Well, my girl did not succeed very well. Then her lover saw his way clear to propose to her, and she knew that she would fail in some of her examinations. Her aunt meant her to come to England and finish her education, but she had to go to the Continent. Grace, with her parents' consent, threw up college life, went home and took a position in a public school that she could have had the year before. She was well fitted

for it. She kept it two years, then was married to the one she loved better than Greek and Latin. They have a home of their own and are very happy I believe. But her aunt was not nice about it, although she refused to take back the money she had advanced, which they offered. But I think Grace chose wisely."

"Oh, I think that is the Miss Trevor. She believes that education alone will raise women. She scouts marriage. Indeed, she inveighs bitterly against it for the poorer classes. It is a big question. I don't pretend to wrestle with it. I think the poor need common education instead of the higher branches. But I wish you could hear her talk. She's of the Socialist order on certain lines. What I have to do mostly is to go straight ahead. I am glad I can earn a fair salary. It would be foolish to marry a poor man with not much of a prospect, so I'm not likely to do that."

"And your sister——"

"Oh, Maud has taken up hospital work. She really has a fondness for it; sympathy and fitness, and a certain intuitive readiness in emergencies. This year she gets a salary.

We both have good health and are, I think, strong, if not strong-minded. But am I boring you? I don't often talk to people this way."

"I think I have done my share of the talking. And it is odd that we should have struck upon Miss Trevor."

"Well, have you been following the game? It's the poorest thing I ever saw! Have you understood any of it?" inquired Frank.

"No, we have been talking about our own happenings, and it has been very interesting. How much longer will the game last?"

He laughed. "Are you tired? Let us get up and walk about. Your sister and Maud are deep in the sorrows and hurts of the poor. There's a little booth out beyond, where you can get some cookies and spruce beer; cream, maybe. I'd like to know what you talked about."

All three laughed. The girls rose. Helen glanced down at the younger girls, who were chatting with some youthful admirers.

There were several refreshment places managed by stout, tidy-looking country women,—

farmers' wives—who counted on turning an honest penny at these infrequent meets. There was some noisy wrangling on the grounds.

“I'd like to kick half a dozen of those fellows,” broke out the young man. “I'm ashamed of the town.”

They refreshed themselves, and Miss Hallet and Frank met some old friends. There was a sudden uproar. The umpire had called “play,” and one party had refused. One side had several innings, the other only one; and there were angry words about unfair play. The guests had begun to disperse.

“I wish you could come over home with us,” began Elinor Hallet. “We are not half talked out. Frank, couldn't you take the others home and then come for Miss Grant? You ought to see all of England that you can, especially the ‘stately homes,’ ” laughing. “Ours is old and has several ghosts; legends of love and hate.”

Helen looked wistful. Upon consulting the others, they were agreed; and while Frank was getting the horses ready, the three walked away.

The small hamlet lay below them. There was a large patch of common, then they seemed to plunge into a wood of gray, soaring beeches, majestic enough for a forest. The road was in good order, though it was just a driving road. Then came a plantation of young trees where saplings seemed to crowd each other. A small stream wound sluggishly about.

"This is not the most enlivening way, but it is the shortest," began Maud. "What a fiasco the game was! They are to have it over again. Last year Harlan came down and gave them a little training. We have always been such friends with Frank! And is not Lady Waring charming?"

"And Sir Charles most delightful."

The road widened and parted, running in two directions. There was a wide cleared space with some shrubbery and beds of flowers, and a queer old gray stone house, much of it ivy-covered. The ponderous hall door, when shut, looked like a barricade, but both parts stood wide open now. A large hall stood revealed, with a worn stone staircase going up one side. There were faded family portraits,

arms, two fine deer heads, one with immense antlers. Rooms opened from the hall, and they entered one.

“The place is entailed,” explained Elinor. “Father’s uncle had it, and he was a queer, unsocial fellow, with one ne’er-do-well son. They quarreled dreadfully, and one day the son was found dead out in the woods, but there were no marks of violence. Then the father was found dead in his room. Our father was doing a small business at Barking, and times had been very hard with him. That was fifteen years ago. He was next in the succession, so we came here. It seemed a Godsend then. Father cleared up the place a good deal. There was quite an income from various sources, but he found that most of his labor would benefit only the next heir. You see, if he had had a son there would have been something to strive for. But the next Hallets—father and son—are idle, drunken, roystering fellows. Father tried to make some compromise about the entail but they would not listen to it, although they expect to break it when they come into possession. We were at school, then I went to

college. Maud did not care for it after the first year, and went in for hospital training. Then, two years ago, father had a stroke. I am glad we have no brother, though it has been a great grief to mother. But on the men's side the Hallets seemed marked for misfortune. Something happens to every one of them who has come here. Several have died violent, mysterious deaths. Father has been growing gradually worse, and now his mind has gone entirely. He's fifteen years older than mother; they were not very young when they were married. So we have had time to adapt ourselves to the great change."

"Oh, what a sad life!" cried Helen.

"A sort of troubled life. It was fortunate to have this home to come to when we did. We can care for ourselves now, and mother has a small income; so we shall get rooms in some London suburb. I don't like what I am teaching in the 'Young Ladies' Seminary," and there was a touch of scorn in her voice, "but it pays well—perhaps because I am a Girton girl. I think we shall some day go to New Zealand. That must be a woman's paradise.

Miss Trevor is right on one point; we people the world too fast. There are too many women earning half a loaf of bread."

The tone had a half indifferent hopelessness about it.

"Why don't you take Miss Grant through the old house and tell her the ghost stories? There are no such places in America, it is too new. Part of this is three centuries old. Some poet says—

" 'All houses where men have lived and died
Are haunted houses—'

but we have never seen a ghost, have we, Nell? "

Still, Helen thought the dilapidated rooms, with their old furniture and dark corners, might harbor no end of ghosts. All the northern part was unused. It was cold and dreary. And there were curious stories, but none of them had really occurred within their time.

"The curse of long ago said that no Hallet should die in his bed," remarked Maud, "but father may break the spell. Mother has a lovely friend—her foster sister—who is well and strong, so she never needs us. We have

nearly always been away. But we love each other dearly, and she will come to us sometime. There is Frank down in the court. Have we chilled your young blood with these dismal tales?"

CHAPTER IV

WAYS OF PLEASURE

It was nice to get out into the sunshine; to see the brilliant bloom and hear the birds. Were these gay colors of Mrs. Hallet's choosing? Helen wondered. How was it that Frank seemed so at home with these two girls, both older than himself? Wouldn't he come in and have some tea and cakes, or fruit? Or they could have it brought here, and she summoned the housekeeper.

They had a rather amusing meal, berating the cricket players, ridiculing the old ghosts of the house, planning some drives, talking about Frank's sister in Canada—until the horses grew restless. It was a pity that Helen's stay was to be so short.

"But people do meet again, somewhere and somehow," said Elinor. "And I'm wonderfully interested in your life. Most of us just

drift and never start out after any real thing."

"I think I shall never do anything wonderful; it will be just the ordinary woman's life."

"If Miss Trevor talks anywhere while you are in London, go to hear her. You will want to achieve something beside the ordinary life. People—women—who have minds have aims."

Frank put her into the carriage and the girls waved their hands to each other. He turned into the southerly road that presently led out to the highway. How beautiful it was with its overarching trees, its bird songs, the patches of blue sky between.

"I'm going to take you for quite a drive. I want you to talk about the Halletts. I'm so glad you met them. They are not of the common run of girls. I wish Elinor had been a boy, a man. After all, women can't do much with their lives."

"Then the entail would go on to some other tragedy."

"It's horrid, isn't it? Father has a cousin who is an M.P., a splendid fellow, too, but I suppose you could call him a Radical. He

thinks there should be no entails. He and father have famous talks, and they care a great deal for each other. Why, our place would go to him if there were no sons. When you are in London you must go and hear some debates. Harlan will be there; you must meet him. Now there's Mossdeane going to ruin, and really it is an historic old place. It's very curiously tied up, father says, and the next heirs would disgrace the neighborhood if they came here. This Mr. Hallet was real energetic at first, but what was the use? He could just have his living. And he is dying now. The doctor doesn't see how he lives from day to day. I like Elinor. She talks of things girls don't usually care for; and she knows such lots of things. She ought to be in a college—will be in ten years' time, I dare say. She's saving money. She's bound not to come to want. Bess likes her a great deal, but you can see they would never be ardent friends. Perhaps Miss Hallet will never be ardent with anybody, but she has it in her."

"What a curious life they must lead."

"Well," reflectively, "so many girls are sent

away to school that they hardly know what home is like. Ours had a governess. Then the better class go into society and marry; the others have to do something, work for a living. And your true Englishman kicks against that."

Helen laughed, then said merrily, "But if there are not men enough to go round, what are they to do? It doesn't seem to me that starvation is a pleasant process."

"Oh, must they starve?"

"Well, you see, they can no longer spin or weave, and the style of living furnishes less work. Machinery makes our clothes, only some one must go to the shops and tend the machines. People live in rooms and flats now, there are no floors to scrub; we buy our bread in the cities; we can get cooked meats and canned things, and it doesn't need three or four girls to do that sort of housekeeping. Idleness soon begets dissatisfaction. Oh, but you see they *must* work."

"She knows so much," he said presently. "She coached me last vacation. She's the greatest hand for the Latin poets. I think she knows the Phædo all by heart, and lots of

other things. She has even studied politics, but I'm afraid she'll go over to the Socialist side."

"Why does she teach in *that* school?" asked Helen. "She seems to consider it pretentious——"

"Maybe she wouldn't confess this to everybody. The salary was so much higher than she was offered elsewhere, she told me. I don't think real learning is always appreciated. And, at first, Mr. Hallet was only paralyzed on one side, and improved. It was thought he might live for years."

What did Frank mean to do with himself?

"Harlan is at Oxford. He wants to take up politics. Fred *would* study engineering—bridge-building and all that sort of thing. He had a good opportunity to go to Canada, and married a railroad magnate's daughter. Why, I shall have to turn farmer and supervise the estate, exhibit fat cattle, and attend county fairs."

They both laughed at that.

"Now here is a beautiful view. Did you ever see such magnificent trees? Give an oak

a fair chance and he is notably king of trees. And see that beech! I love trees. Don't you suppose they understand when the leaves whisper to each other?"

So they dallied along. She did not laugh at his conceits as Elinor Hallet felt free to, some of them were so tender; things you did not look for in a young fellow shedding boyhood. It was quite late when they drove up the avenue. The three girls were in a group on the step. The twins nodded. Miss Orton held her head up stiffly.

Helen colored. She ought to have known better than to monopolize the only young man. She nodded gayly, saying:—

"They kept us awhile at the Halleys', and then we had an enchanting drive."

Juliet was in her room, writing letters. There was a pile for Helen. "Are they all well?" she asked.

"Yes. Theo is very good without me. I do think she is a lovely child. I am wild to see her again."

There was a letter from Mr. Hildreth, one from Dick Eastman—and the other brought

a warm flush to her face. She did not want a rapturous love letter just now. She took off her hat and smoothed her hair; fanned herself—for the air of the room was warm after the balmy wind out of doors—and began to talk about the Hallets and what Frank had said of the cricket players. Then she went to her own room, bathed her face, brushed her hair, and put on her white frock. How charming everything was! The white window draperies, the vase of flowers, the few most appropriate pictures, the shelf of books—there was Browning among them.

Dick's letter was very entertaining. He had procured a guide-book, and was going to follow every step of the journey. And there was some pleasant gossip of the town. A plot for a new factory had been bought, down by the bend of the river. Then the books he was reading.

“I don't suppose you will meet any boys, real English boys, who have been to Eton or Rugby. I wish you could see the House of Commons and some of the men who are talked about so much. It's funny that their season

should be in midsummer. Remember all the splendid things to tell the school."

Was she so very much in love a month ago? Was she tired and chaotic now, and would it all come back to her? She was frightened at herself. Putting the letters in a drawer she went out again to Juliet.

"Mrs. Aldred thinks we had better take Scotland next week, and then return to London. She has had a note from a friend who would like to join us, and with her husband and son will start on Thursday. That will give us three days for going about. We must not loiter so much, pleasant as the loitering is. It will not make so much difference to me, but she must be home on time, and you as well."

"We shall have to come again and again! How people see it all in a few days——"

"They go about with guide-book in hand; that explains faster than your eyes or your thoughts."

"Well," returned Helen.

They settled it that evening. Helen kept with the elders. Whether Frank did not like

it, or was weary of feminines, she could not tell, for he stayed off somewhere.

He walked to church with Miss Orton the next morning, and felt he had done his duty. Why was there so little you could say to girls?

Elizabeth came up, about mid-afternoon, and begged them to come to the drawing-room. Her father's cousin had driven over from Westmere, and would be pleased to see all the party. The girls had already made his acquaintance.

"He is the Parliament man," said Helen, "Frank's especial favorite. Why, we *are* in luck."

Archibald Waring was tall and fair, with a certain family resemblance, an affable manner, and a rich, fluent voice that would attract attention at once. He was detailing family matters. They were bargaining for a house when the two youngest came down with the measles. The house was given up as some one stood ready to take it, but the cases had proved very light, and they had resumed their plans. Lady Redgrave had offered them her house, as she was going to Spain, and next week Caro-

line, Mrs. Waring, would go in and settle herself. The children would be left with the nurse; if anything happened they could get to them very easily. And now he had come over to get Lady Waring and Elizabeth to promise them a week; the first in August would suit his wife. There were to be some great debates toward the last, and it would be very interesting. Were their friends going to be in London any length of time?

Mrs. Aldred rehearsed their plans. They could spend about ten days in Scotland, and a little later visit some of the noted places of Ireland. There was always so much more to see than one had counted on. They had hoped to get to Paris for a few days.

"Then we shall expect to see you in London, and I shall be glad to be of service to you. You will want to *see* some of the speakers, if you cannot hear what they say. That is not so much matter to people who do not have to suffer or obey legislation."

"Or not even understand it," commented Sir Charles, with a rather humorous smile.

Then the two men fell into a discussion of

the Irish question, to which Helen listened with a good deal of interest. Archibald Waring had a fine, flexible voice, and he was too well-bred to attack Sir Charles' opinions very forcibly just now. Then Mr. Waring took up the ladies' forthcoming journey, and spoke of the historic places they must be sure to see, mentioning several they had not put down. He was very interesting. But he would not stay to dinner; it was a long ride back to Westmere, and he was due in London on Monday noon.

"That happens most opportunely," said Mrs. Aldred. "For several privileges, you do have to apply to a member. I knew some two or three well enough to ask a favor, but it is pleasanter to have things come to you."

"We seem to be in luck," declared Juliet. "I have heard of tourists being snubbed; but I don't wonder at it when I see the pushing people one meets. They get snubbed in our own city."

"I was wondering what good angel would come to our assistance," laughed Helen. "The authorities, I believe, pay more attention to accredited angels."

The visit had been delightful, certainly, and both parties were glad it was not to be a final farewell. Sir Charles went into London with them, and wished matters were so that he could escort them through Scotland. When they came to England again, they must remember his house would be open to them.

"I shall carry away a most charming impression of English hospitality," declared Helen.

Yet it was pleasant to be in their own rooms again, and gather up a few more letters. There was one from Mrs. Foxcroft. The girls had arranged their lawn party for Wednesday afternoon. Two of their cousins were going to Wales for the summer, and they wanted to meet the American schoolmates, so the matter had been hurried up. They certainly must not disappoint Edith and Janet.

"Then we must be ready to start on Thursday morning sharp," declared Mrs. Aldred.

"We will not listen to another blandishment of these charming Islanders, even if they offer us a presentation to the Queen," said Helen.

"But wouldn't you like it?" inquired Miss Orton? "I'd give up all the rest of the journey for that."

"I should feel frightened to death," declared Elma. "I should not know how to manage a train, or make the Court courtesy, or back out with grace—and what else?"

"You have to be trained," said Mrs. Aldred. "It takes time and a good deal of money, and unless you have friends who are in the swim, as we say, and can have an interview with the ambassador, it can hardly be engineered. We may see royalty, sometime, out in the carriage. Queen Alexandra is often being driven about."

"But we can never see Queen Victoria."

"Well, we must answer about the lawn party at once. Then we will go out shopping, and see some of the sights."

"It's a garden party," said Elma.

"I think it will be about the same as ours at home on the lawn. There is the beautiful turf, the trees, beds of flowers, and it isn't walled in. There is next door on each side. It will always be a beautiful place to me, Mrs. Aldred, another home."

Wilma's cheeks were glowing and her eyes softly bright with depth of feeling.

"Thank you, my dear." Mrs. Aldred bent and kissed her.

They started out. Yes, there was Regent Street—with some of the best shops, the guide-book said. Begun almost a hundred years ago to connect the residence of the Prince Regent with Regent's Park. Yes, it was splendid. Elegant vehicles lined the sidewalk, and grand ladies sat within them. And there were the beautiful buildings of storied memory, the churches, the statues, and fountains.

"We cannot afford to do our frugal shopping here," said Juliet to the girls. "We do not want very much, after all. And we must not load ourselves up with useless things to pay duty on at the other side. And there will be Paris."

Then they went over to Oxford Street, where the traffic and activity seemed enough to craze one. Splendid shops here, as well, and many aristocratic residences. Then they went out to the old Roman road to St. Albans. Then, in Harrow road, they found the fine park that

had been St. Mary's Churchyard, where Mrs. Sarah Siddons was buried. There were notable houses all about, where notable people had lived and died.

"I wonder what New York will be a hundred years from now," said Helen. "Just a mart for traffic. Even now few remember where the famous people of the early century lived. The houses are hustled out to make room for business and offices; there is no sacredness about anything of the past, no handsome monuments will be erected. I like the association with the past."

"But our great city is just a long, narrow strip, and the wharves and docks are precious. London can stretch out in every direction.

"And look at our beautiful Bronx! Miserable rows of apartment houses, whose crowning virtue is that they will fall down by and by. We are too fond of moving on, of the incessant change," and Helen's tone was almost indignant.

They found a pleasant, retired place, where they could rest and order refreshments, for

now they realized they were very tired. And then it was best to go home.

"Letters are the perplexity of a journey abroad," declared Helen in a half resentful tone.

"But you have so many friends."

"And one who says, 'You need not answer, but save the most splendid things until you come back.' And he sends lots of really charming home gossip."

"Oh, it is *he!*" Miss Orton gave a rather impertinent emphasis.

"One of my most delightful scholars," returned Miss Grant.

"Mother wants me to write her everything. And she will be so disappointed if we don't see the Queen," was the girl's rejoinder.

Helen took her letters to her room. Of course Gordon's *were* love letters. And there were so many things to distract her mind, calling up odd bits of half forgotten history—she had always been so interested in England. Then the talks with Juliet, Mrs. Aldred, and the pleasant enthusiasm of the twins, who were enjoying everything so much. She did not

altogether like Miss Orton, though she was, perhaps, up to the average.

She smiled over Gordon's complaint. "Tell me everything," he said with a young lover's eagerness. There was but one thing the word comprehended to him. And she was too tired to dissect her own feelings. They were mixed up with many other emotions. She had come abroad to see, to enjoy to the uttermost, to rest up between times. Traveling in such a rich country took most of one's present interest. She liked to lie on the side of her bed and talk matters over with Juliet—matters which were largely Juliet's experiences and plans: the fine people she was becoming affiliated with in New York; the Bells and their happiness—they had two babies now, and the verses were mostly about them.

"But she *does* enjoy her motherhood; though, for that matter, she enjoys everything with such zest. Then I think of those lovely poems Mrs. Gartney wrote, that came from imagination merely. Do you suppose she was capable of truly loving a man like Mr. Gartney? But his life was so brief afterward that he had

not come to any sense of loss. Oh, I *do* hope he knows the little girls are happy."

It used to flash across Helen's mind, what a lovely wife Juliet would have made for him.

There were two more days of sight-seeing, then Wednesday they decided to stay in-doors and arrange their Scottish tour. The girls were eager for the garden party, and absorbed in adornment.

"I really feel as if we were too much of a crowd to descend upon Mrs. Foxcroft," said Helen. "I am the only one who can be left out——"

"And you are not going to be," returned Mrs. Aldred. "We grown people will not be asked to help entertain. It is really a school-girl's affair; and you will like to see how English girls manage, who are not considered in society. Furthermore, I want you to meet Mr. Foxcroft."

"Of course it would be most impolite to decline."

The garden looked really lovely. Festoons of crêpe paper were stretched from point to point, and Japanese lanterns were hung here and

there, to be lighted when evening shades began to appear. Mrs. Foxcroft and her daughters received the guests with charming cordiality. Then the younger members retired to the garden, where there were small tables with games and puzzles, and the girls began to come, in pretty gala attire characterized by simplicity. Miss Orton did look rather overdressed.

Brothers, and some cousins of the girls accompanied them, others would come later on. They were soon merry enough, and now Miss Orton showed her most agreeable side.

The elders were on the wide porch. They talked of what they had seen, of their visit to the Grange, and Sir Charles. Yes, they had heard of Mr. Archibald Waring. He was one of the liberal members, and carried weight with his party.

"They are delightful people," remarked Helen. "I did expect lines would be rather more distinctly drawn. Oh, you don't know how much I shall make, when I reach home, of having visited titled people."

"Your father's name and work would give

you entrance to many distinguished people. I was afraid of this sort of caste when I was first married, but I found, after a little, that it was a very good thing, and saved much heart-burning. There are many delightful friends in your own walk in life, there are pushing, uneasy ones here as well as over there, only I honestly think money doesn't count for so much. And at home—do the next lower round go in with what is called the four hundred? Sometimes, at fairs for charity, a Princess comes down and is most affable, but we do not dream of being invited to the palace. There are so many things; concerts where you hear the finest singers, picture galleries, lectures. We see many famous people. My husband's father bought this place. My husband took the business, and paid his two sisters for their share of the house. Both are nicely married; one to a farmer, the other to a physician. The house had been changed somewhat and beautified. It is pleasant enough for us to spend our lives here, and when we want a change, to take a journey. If we were in America, we might have sold and gone to some pretentious

new place. Mr. Foxcroft might have entered into new schemes, and I might have struggled into the circle of the pushing ones. Would we have been any better or happier? We might have come to grief. Truly, I think I like this better. My ambition for my daughters is that they shall marry worthy men in their own walk in life. We have a very dear friend, whose father made a fortune and married his daughter to a title. Most of her money has been spent to redeem the ancestral home from ruin. She is neglected, lives alone with her two children and a half imbecile mother-in-law, while he spends most of his time in London. Do you suppose I would change places with her for the title?" and the hostess's eyes gave a positive denial.

Mr. Foxcroft joined the little circle. Helen was much pleased with him. He was quite a superior man, she thought, well-read and seeming to be informed on what was transpiring outside of his own country. He was taking a warm interest, too, in the present Parliament, where the Irish question was causing much anxiety.

Mrs. Foxcroft went out to look after her girls. The lanterns had been lighted, two serving women were arranging the small tables with refreshments. There was a good deal of laughter and chaff. Miss Orton was really trying her best, and was full of a sort of bright wit. All was going on nicely. The girls from Miss Bradshaw's Seminary found their mates had not distanced them so much; the young fellows had worn off their shyness and were having an enjoyable time.

The elders had dinner and then joined the party. Mr. Foxcroft seemed warmly welcomed. Helen thought it a pretty picture, they were all so merry, talking, laughing over bright sayings, quoting odd lines of verses.

"I'm so sorry you are leaving us so soon," said one of the girls to Helen. "We are going to have a picnic over to Gilston Downs on Saturday. There is a tennis court, and we shall play, and a stone fireplace where you can cook things, and swings and hammocks. Oh, can't you stay? The Gartney twins are so nice."

"I am afraid not," answered Helen. "You

see, we are tourists and have only so much time."

"Well, I'm glad you are not going to take Edith and Janet back. We've missed them so much. We always have such a good time over here."

Mrs. Foxcroft said, "Oh, we will see you before you go back. I am so glad to have met your party, Mrs. Aldred," and the gentleman advised Helen to go to the House of Commons at least once before their return.

The Gartneys were much delighted, and begged Aunt Jue to give them a lawn party when they reached home.

"But we don't know many to ask," said Wilma. "The schoolgirls are scattered around so. And now we will have to hunt up some girls at Kingsland."

"It wasn't much of a party," declared Miss Orton. "There wasn't anything but that stupid march around the walks. I think they might have had some regular dancing in that cleared space. I'd rather have a ball. Some of those English boys have to learn to dance."

"Young people—schoolgirls—never have

anything but birthday parties, Janet told me, and, after awhile, a ball. I have an aunt in Albany, and I mean to go there next winter. I shan't stay home and be stupid. I want lots of beaus."

"I am afraid Miss Orton's tour will not do her much good, only just to say she has been abroad. I really did not care to take her, but her mother insisted; and she begged so. She has very little interest in places, and I think she hoped that we would get into some kind of society. As if one could, in journeying about! Half the girls of eighteen might better wait until they are eight-and-twenty," declared Mrs. Aldred with spirit.

CHAPTER V

SOCIAL STATICS AND DYNAMICS

It seemed to Helen that the journey through Scotland was like a moving panorama. It was a long time before she could settle it all—the beautiful places full of romance, chivalry, love, and death; the wonderful towns; the churches, monuments, rivers, and lakes—coherently in her mind, unless she studied the guide-book.

In the early stages they met an American clergyman, who was taking extensive notes, with the aid of his wife, looking forward to adding to the already numberless books of travel. Helen found him very lame on historical points, and he was quite delighted with her freshness.

“You must have a very systematic memory,” he said.

"Due to college training, I think," with a short laugh.

"I have always been sorry that I did not go," said Mrs. Lorton. "But twenty years ago it was not considered so necessary, and then I married."

They must have been past their first youth, Helen thought.

They lingered about Holyrood Palace, and exhumed the old stories of the beautiful and ill-fated Queen Mary. Mr. Lorton took the condemnatory side. "I could have forgiven her many things, but her eloping with Black Bothwell stamped her criminality."

"I like to think of her girl-life in France. And Elizabeth made all the after years a tragedy. It was right for her to marry, but it was an unwise choice, and it must have embittered the Queen's later years, to think that Mary's son would come after her. I suppose there will always be warm sympathizers and as heated detractors."

There were the famous cities, and the writers who had lent the glory of their enchantment. The twins went over the "Lady of the Lake"

and quoted it daily. There were the beautiful lakes and rivers, with their legends.

"But our time is up and we must say farewell," declared Mrs. Aldred. "You have not half done London yet."

"Oh, dear! Suppose I stay and never return to America?" suggested Helen. "I am so in love with everything."

Juliet studied her. Sometimes she wondered how much she was in love with Gordon Danforth.

"And I shall lose in Mr. Underwood's estimation," she continued in a comically serious tone. "I don't know how tourists can be satisfied with one visit!"

"Tourists may. Travelers cannot."

"A nice distinction. I shall pray for a fortune, that I may enroll myself among the travelers."

And so they bade adieu to the fascinating scenes, and it seemed quite like home to get back to their quiet, comfortable rooms. To Helen, it appeared like a splendid dream, and was a vision put away to be saved to think over in some leisure time. For was not the

brain like a picture gallery? And there must be new compartments added to it, new treasures stored away.

"There are so many things yet to do and to see. Wasn't it Dr. Johnson who said there was 'more learning and science within a circumference of ten miles from where we sit than in all the rest of the Kingdom'? What would he say now?" remarked Juliet.

"That there were more towns and villages in London than in any other place in the world. Isn't Mother Shipton's prophecy come true that Highgate Hill will one day be the center of the city?" laughed Helen. "We must go to the market at Covent Garden and to some other gardens. What a mercy you can ride in every direction!"

"I want to see some of the Children's Homes and hospitals," said Juliet. "How many thousands there must be needing care! But the girls will not be interested in these matters. We might leave them at the waxworks."

"One of the most splendid hospitals is built on the site of the old Marshalsea," commented Mrs. Aldred.

“Oh, I want to see that,” cried Helen eagerly. “One of the most pathetic things is the Dorrits’ going out after their fortune came. The vain and selfish Fanny, the fashion and elegance of Tip, the pretensions of Pa; and Little Dorrit, who had worked and struggled, being quite forgotten until the family were in the carriage and the attendant shutting up the steps. And Mr. Clenham finding her in a dead faint on the floor, and bringing her down in his arms; and Fanny thinking only of the old frock she had on, her prison frock that she meant to wear until the last moment. What a picture it makes!”

“Oh, we must read it,” said Elma. “We haven’t gone as far as that in Dickens. And we must find some more of the places he wrote about. I think I’ll go with you, Aunt Jue.”

“I don’t like hospitals or sickness,” declared Miss Orton. “Won’t you take the waxworks with me?” glancing at Wilma.

“Why—yes,” rather reluctantly.

The maid could attend them there. Miss Craven was so interested in children’s refuges in what she felt was her own city, that she was

anxious to learn the methods of other countries. She thought of the swarms of pallid, hungry-eyed children on the East Side, who had no playground but the gutter.

The building was beautiful in itself. Many curious things and interesting pictures had been donated to it. And it was so clean and orderly; the uniformed nurses had such sweet faces, she thought. Most of them were comparatively young. And the little white cots, with their inmates who could not do much toward helping themselves, but had come to have the look of heavenly patience and resignation. They did not see the extreme sufferers, who were by themselves.

"I want to spend the whole day," said Miss Craven, as she turned away reluctantly.

"The days are too short," appended Helen.

And when they reached home there were notes and cards. Sir Charles Waring had been in. Lady Waring had accepted her cousin's invitation to spend a week with her, and they wanted to renew their acquaintance with Mrs. Aldred's party. Miss Waring would call on them the next morning.

"Oh, that's just splendid!" cried the girls.

There were some tickets from the Foxcrofts for a concert that evening, and, if they had no scruples, a *matinée* for the next afternoon.

"Surely the fates are generous," said Helen laughingly.

The concert was not over their heads, fortunately. There were some fine Scotch songs, some amusing Irish ones, and they felt very well entertained. Mrs. Aldred expressed her obligations.

"It is a charity affair, and Mr. Foxcroft was apprehensive that we would not have a very large audience. It is for the homes of our old people. They are just little cottages of two rooms and an attic, and a little garden plot. When the men are old or disabled, and have wives, they are eligible—or perhaps an elderly daughter. But we had a very good audience. They want to build two more cottages. You must come and look at them before you go home."

"Why, we shall be glad to," returned Juliet.

"I suppose there is a greater need of charity in an old country," said Mrs. Aldred, "but you

people have modes of beneficence that quite put us to shame. It is nice for the old women to do their simple housekeeping, a continual interest."

The matinee was quite a girls' party. Two mothers were to chaperon them.

Sir Charles and his daughter came in, the next morning, and had some plans. They called on Lady Waring, and found the cousin's wife a most agreeable woman in the early thirties, very much interested in her husband's speech, which was to come the following week. Of the notable places, there were Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament. Then Dublin, Paris, and home.

They all went to Westminster and were awed by the plain, reverent service, the vastness and grandeur of the buildings, and the pilgrimage afterward amid the memorials of heroes, great men, and poets who have been given a lasting remembrance by their country. There was much to awaken the sincerest veneration. Helen and Juliet were touched by the atmosphere of consecration. At the House of Parliament, Mr. Waring invited them to tea on



MR. WARING INVITED THEM TO TEA ON THE TERRACE.—Page 100.

the Terrace, the ambition of many tourists and the envy of those who have no Parliamentary friend. It was all very impressive. The long, darkish entrance with its turns, the austere policemen taking one's card; then another passageway, a long hall, and the interior of the Houses of Parliament opens upon the visitor. Sir Charles and Mr. Archibald convoyed them to the Ladies' Gallery, that gave them a view of the speakers. Then, through another passageway, there was a glimpse of the House of Lords, with some of the venerable members in their places. There was nothing exciting going on and the droning voice was quite indistinct. But the House of Commons was more interesting, Helen thought. There were many fine, strong faces. Mr. Waring pointed out some of the notable men that she had heard about and was glad to see.

Then another walk through a rather gloomy passage, and one came out to the beautiful Terrace along the river. Up and down the river much of interest was to be seen; the two towers, the splendid Victoria Tower, the spires that caught and reflected the changes in the

sky, the Clock Tower with Big Ben. It was true, Helen thought, that all these points had to be seen to be appreciated.

They were joined by several friends of both men. Sir Charles was certainly very well known. The ramble about the Terrace was most delightful, then the gentlemen found them seats. Attendants were bringing cups of tea or coffee and hot buttered muffins, and the chat was full of amusement as well as interest. Of course the party graciously admitted they had not seen half. "But I don't know that we could contain any more," Helen said. "It will take me at least ten years to get my mind and memory adjusted to the right focus. I shall be putting things in the wrong streets, and giving them names they never dreamed of."

"Are any of you women writing a book?" inquired one of the guests, with a twinkle in his eye. "Isn't it customary?"

"Because the men do it when they come over to us?" asked Helen mirthfully. "No, we are just plain people."

"One of your men wrote a book about a traveler who had returned home fairly burst-

ing with everything he had seen—and perhaps read. When he met a friend who had been abroad, a conversation like this ensued: ‘Did you go to such a town and see a wonderful picture—or building?’ ‘No, I didn’t really have time.’ ‘Then you might as well have stayed at home.’ And the friend would launch out into what he had seen. It seemed so, all the time, and the poor fellow was so tired of having no opportunity to unburden himself, that in despair he advertised for some one to come and listen to him while he talked, two hours every evening.”

“And did any one come?” inquired Sir Charles.

“I believe so.” The narrator glanced around as if asking some one’s assistance.

“Yes, he came,” interposed Helen. “It is Stockton’s story, and they found it so interesting that they made a book out of all pertaining to it.”

“We begin to know all countries so well now that you can hardly mention a place in Africa or anywhere else but some one has been there. Even the Great Sandy Desert no longer

has terrors. There is nothing left—not even the North Pole. Ladies, here are some more muffins. We may never meet in this way again.”

They were delightful, Helen thought, and the coffee was nectar. She liked the men's talk, too, though the young girls were not in it, to Miss Orton's chagrin. The three elders were to dine with Mrs. Archibald Waring and the cousins and Frank had gone to Oxford, where his brother was in training for a rowing match. So the pleasant party was broken up, but two of the men, besides Sir Charles, were to be dinner guests.

Miss Orton declared that most men you met were stupid. And if she didn't see the Queen anywhere she might as well have stayed at home. And she would like to see at least one grand old English home with all the portraits and hundreds-of-years-old curiosities.

The house in Portman Square might have appeased her. It and the furniture were undeniably old, and there were copies of some famous pictures. The hostess was very charming. Helen thought her beautiful in her din-

ner gown. Why wasn't she "Lady Waring" as well?

The talk was very entertaining. The question of woman's suffrage was looming up, though it had not reached its climax. It seemed not to have many advocates.

"I dropped into Arley House Sunday afternoon. They're not suffragists actually, nor quite Socialists; there are so many beliefs, I don't think the women themselves know what they believe. It is some sort of a woman's club. And there was a very good speaker; a fine woman, perhaps a little past middle age, that interested me very much. She is down for a regular speech next Sunday, and I want to hear her. Not that I am on the suffrage side," laughing. "A Miss Trevor. She's been spoken of quite often."

"Miss Marian Trevor?" asked Helen in a breath.

"Yes. Do you know her?"

"I was in college with her niece. Doesn't she believe education to be the grand panacea?"

Helen smiled, recalling Grace Trevor's experience.

"In a way it is—the right sort of education. But what are you going to do with girls of twelve who must go to work in shops and factories to keep from starving, and marry or do worse at eighteen? So you are a college girl?" giving Helen a half smile.

"Yes. So far it has been useful to me," she returned briefly.

"I have nothing to say against it. But as matters stand, with all the advances we have not enough to go round."

Then they veered round to Socialism; to some of the land questions that were making themselves heard. Socialism was developing with rapid strides in the States, Mr. Waring had heard.

"I am afraid I am not much of a politician," Helen said with a smile.

Then the ladies had a little general talk until they left the table. Mrs. Archibald Waring spoke of several fine debates she had heard, and of notable legislators. Helen was much interested. She thought Lady Waring a most intelligent woman. But there was such a wide life in London.

Later in the evening, Helen was in Mr. Acherson's vicinity again.

"Will you please tell me about this Hall—or Arley House, I think you called it."

"Yes; Mrs. Arley is a rich woman and has opened her house to all kinds of debates about women, the 'enfranchisement of women,' I think they call it. Men and women go, and if they have anything to say, say it, so long as there is no disputing. Some of the women are good talkers; they really are our helpmeets in politics, and stand up bravely for us. But the seething mass——"

"Can any one go?"

"Oh, yes. You know people don't want to, unless they are really interested. It's somehow broader than mere suffrage. Now, if you and your friend would like to go, I should be very happy to escort you."

"Oh, thank you. I should so like to see Miss Trevor."

"Give me your address, please. At three or thereabouts."

Juliet said she shouldn't care to go. She would rather visit some of the churches.

But Mrs. Aldred accepted the invitation readily.

They were all surprised and delighted the next day, when they came suddenly upon an imposing cortège. In the first carriage of state were the beautiful Queen Alexandra and the Princess Maud; in the next, the Princess of Wales with her pretty daughter and young son.

Miss Orton was delighted beyond measure and was in the best of spirits. Then Frank Waring called and Helen generously effaced herself, rather to his chagrin.

Mr. Acherson called at the time appointed. It was some distance, but a rather inviting-looking house with a wide lawn and roomy porch. Instead of a hallway there were some columns halfway down, which made the front all one large room. Mrs. Arley stood here, a tall, imposing woman, with snowy white hair and dark eyes; an earnest face, but withal rather attractive. She bowed to the guests, spoke to some, and waved them to the seats on either side.

The meeting opened with music, then a man

made a rather brief address. There followed two labor songs, a few questions were asked and answered, and Miss Trevor was announced. The audience was made up largely of the working population of the better class, one might say,—some very neatly attired,—and an outside ring of factory girls.

Miss Trevor was fine and vigorous-looking, with a trained voice that seemed to carry weight and conviction. It was no effort for her to speak, though at first Helen thought it must be over the heads of most of her audience. She was not surprised to find that the panacea was education.

“What opportunity do most of you have for it? There are night schools, there are lectures on cooking and housekeeping. What does the woman who comes from the well-kept house with her maid know of her who leaves shop or factory, aching in every limb, to go to her two dismal rooms where everything is dirt and disorder—where the stove is old, the chimney smoky, her cooking utensils burned at the bottom? But she dumps in her potatoes and onions, carrots, maybe a little stale parsley,

and a wilted turnip—the best she can get for her money—and while it is stewing, calls in her children from the street, washes off the worst of the grime, cuts off knots of tousled hair that no comb can go through, settles quarrels, administers slaps, sets her table—and then enters the lord and master, who has spent an hour at the public, drinking beer and haranguing his compeers on work and wages. They all know so much about the state of the country! they are so capable of making laws for men and women! are so wise about women's duties! He beats a child for some trifle, grumbles about the food that he has not half earned. She takes it meekly. 'If she fed him properly he would not haunt the public,' he flings at her; 'it is her fault he is boozy half the time.' If she dared resent, she would, in all probability, get a blow. She is sober herself, and has learned by experience. Then he lights his pipe and goes out. The children, cross and sleepy, are huddled into bed. She makes a little clearing, thinking of the scant time there is in the morning. What is evening school, what are classes to her? Be-

tween them both, they manage to earn enough not to starve. Sometimes an old woman comes and looks after the children, oftener they are being educated by the street gamins. Is it any wonder they turn out thieves and criminals and add to the expense of the country? They are not even fit for soldiers, statistics show; they have no strength, no stamina. But the sons, at twenty, marry and go on reproducing their kind.

“Yet you women, you girls, have it all in your own hands. Why do you marry these men? You have seen your mothers’ lives, your neighbors’ lives! Can you believe yours will be any better? Can you call that maudlin thing, half beer, ‘Love’? You can do for yourself. You can earn a comparatively wholesome living for yourself. What is a few months’ sojourn in a fool’s paradise to lifelong degradation; to work, hunger, blows? And you *do* know it. Why can’t you women make homes, you who are sober and clean-hearted, and like a clean home to come to? There have been instances of women caring for each other. Keep these brute beasts at

bay until they have learned their lesson, that you are not to be had for slaves, that love and home are something better and higher than they can offer, that you were not made by Almighty God to bring into the world a race of stunted, half-deformed, idiotic, starved children. Oh! how can you do it? Will any Woman's Movement help you, while you persist in this course?"

Miss Trevor did not rant. Her voice was forceful and under excellent control, and Helen listened with intense interest to her further talk. It was to strengthen women to believe more in themselves, to use their latent faculties, to educate themselves to the true purposes of life, advancement. Then, when they found standing-room, they could dictate. When they no longer looked up to men as demigods who had a right to soul and body, they would meet on equal terms; not be masters on the one hand, slaves on the other. There were a few other short speeches, mostly veering to suffrage. Then by common consent, without any dismissal, people rose, and there was a stir—a confusion of low talking. A group hovered about

Miss Trevor, others surged toward the tea-tables.

“Do you want to speak to her?” asked Mrs. Aldred.

“Oh, I don’t mind. It isn’t as if I really knew her. And there are so many waiting for her.”

“She is a fine speaker. She said some very true things.”

“Well?” Juliet looked up with a smile as they entered. “Have you been converted to—what is really the gist of it all?”

“I wish you could have heard her. It was a very attentive, well-behaved audience—not much of a suffrage meeting.”

“No—I see by the paper that Mr. Foxcroft brought in—he came and took the girls out for a drive—that the suffragists really do not own her. What then? Is she a Socialist?”

“I do not think that, either. The house is large and inviting, with well-kept grounds.” Helen smiled a little. “She is opposed to youthful marriages, to marriages of the poor—well, things are different in England. And

she is full of pity for the swarms of children that have no right to be here. She showed how little the men really regarded marriage when they went away and left their wives and children."

Juliet sighed. "I should like to have heard that part. We have so much of it at home. Yes, if marriage could be made a more responsible thing! And these men who go off, find work in another town, and marry again. How can girls, women, believe that is love?"

"She wants the girls to club together and make homes for themselves, to study, to improve, to let the men severely alone. It is the woman that makes the home, after all. She ought to know you, Juliet."

"But working women, girls, can't very well make a home," and Juliet smiled proudly.

"Why not, if they joined together? If there were enough, one might keep the house. There is so much beer-drinking over here, and often the wives work in factories. Oh, I don't believe you ever can quite right the world!" Helen exclaimed, with a half smile. "But I

can't imagine Grace Trevor ever making the kind of woman that would satisfy her aunt. And she is delightfully happy with her husband and two children. Her sister also has a home of her own. They are girls just fitted for home life. Then this Miss Trevor has made a money success of her life, as well."

Helen recalled the proudly poised, confident, well-kept woman. Could all women attain to that? No, they could not. But, as she had said, although having more opportunities than women, not all *men* succeeded. And that women were not as necessary to men as they imagined they were. Something stirred within Helen. Mrs. Yarrow's upbraiding came back to her. What if she could fill some more notable position? It was "the era of woman," everybody was saying. She had never thought much about the great trend that was stirring the world; the new spirit that had been struggling through the dark, through ignorance, and that came from a higher source than a man's temporary worship.

Had she been caught in the enchanted whirl? Why, she could do something with her own

life. If proffers had come to her already, might not others be on their way? But her marriage was not an immediate thing. There was much to be done before that.

CHAPTER VI

THE JOY OF COMING BACK

SIR CHARLES came for the ladies. The girls were going to Mrs. Foxcroft's. They had viewed the House of Lords and the House of Commons, and a country drive would be better than a talk on something they did not understand. Were girls so different, Helen wondered. Or was it having no real responsibility of life? Still, she had always wanted to do something with herself, to reach up to some point that she might have an influence on those around her, to rouse them. To be Juliet's satellite would not have satisfied her, even with the warm, generous love her friend would have lavished.

They took their way along the Terrace that had been so full of laughing, chatting people a few days ago. There was, here and there, a group lounging in the shade of the under roof

of cloud, that held no indication of storm. How grand the long stretch of buildings was, and the river flowing peacefully along; just now it seemed strangely quiet. They threaded their way along, and he guided them to the Ladies' Gallery. It was not very full, there was no really momentous question being discussed, though the argument was near the heart of the Liberals.

Lady Waring and her cousin had reserved excellent seats for them, and gave them a smiling welcome. Some one, an elderly man, was droning along, and presently took his seat, when Mr. Archibald Waring rose.

Helen glanced at his wife. Yes, she must be proud of a man like that. He looked almost soldierly as he squared his shoulders, holding his head in an impressive manner, and his voice was clear and commanding. Without being dogmatic, he was strong and persuasive and his thought had application to some of the great measures agitating the country. He spoke of the people and for the people. And though Helen understood but little of what was involved, she did enjoy the earnest-

ness, the force of this speaker, who kept to reasonable and gentlemanly lines, and felt she could have gone on listening—indeed, was sorry when he sat down.

The argument against his theories seemed pointless. She glanced around the House and peered at the Upper Chamber. How many old men there were! Some were absolutely dozing. Mrs. Waring pointed out several notable ones, some of them she had seen on the Terrace at the tea.

But it was getting late, so they had to leave the Warings with many expressions of delighted gratitude for their charming hospitality.

“We sincerely hope we shall see you some time again, Miss Grant,” Lady Waring said, with a cordial pressure of the hand. “I think you do Mrs. Aldred infinite credit.”

Then back to their lodgings for a few last things, packing, good-bys, and with much real regret they began their journey across the Channel.

As for Paris, that was like an exasperating dream, where all things seemed mixed and merged into a kaleidoscope. Mr. Verhoeven

was on the spot to greet them, and had looked up some convenient lodgings for them. If their French was not quite up to the mark in pronunciation, it answered very well. Yes—it was different from London—from New York. A sort of glorious, unique city, with its palaces, its beautiful streets thronged with people, its gala aspect. They spent one day over pictures, one day shopping, one miscellaneous day with everything crowded into it. Mr. and Mrs. Valatin were there, settled for a two months' stay. Almost they persuaded Miss Craven and her charges to remain, but Juliet felt there was a great deal awaiting her at home. And they were all tired with the continuous sight-seeing.

So it was restful to be on shipboard and have a few long, quiet days to talk over the summer's delight, in the lingering fashion that brings dozens of half-forgotten things to the fore in radiant colors.

Yes, it had been most delightful. Helen felt as if somehow she was emerging from girlhood into a new life. It was not the love she had taken with her. She had given no time to

dreams of the future with Gordon Danforth. Something in the very present seemed urgent.

How would the little town look, after all the foreign grandeur? And the men in the Houses of Parliament; Archibald Waring, Sir Charles, even Mr. Foxcroft, with his kindly thought and gentlemanly ways—those she had come to know in the friendliest fashion. Well—there was Mr. Hildreth. He was there to meet her, as well as Gordon, who she thought was looking rather worn. They would all go to a hotel for the night, and until the luggage had been passed. Yes, she was very glad to see Gordon, who questioned her with fervent eyes.

“You thought me a poor correspondent,” she said. “But there was so much to distract one’s thoughts, so few moments one could snatch from sight-seeing. And”—a warm color flushed her face—“I am afraid I am not good at love letters.”

“We will make it up in talk later on. Yes, I know there were so many of you. But I should have liked to make the one more. Then there would have been no need of letters.”

"And you were at Niagara?"

"Yes. My friend stays away another month yet. Oh, I wished for you!"

"I have been there twice. Well, I don't know as one would tire of it——"

"The place for brides—and for marriages," laughing. "I meant to have a visit with Mr. Hildreth, but this opportunity came so soon. And it was too good to decline. And you have been very happy?" with a half-questioning intonation.

Had he hoped she would say she had longed for him?

"Why, one has hardly time to think. It is all so new and strange. Mrs. Aldred had some charming friends. Oh, yes, the days were full of pleasant things all the time. In a way that was happiness. I do enjoy everything intensely."

Gordon was to take the night train back, having an engagement at ten the next morning. So he had only a brief while with Helen, and murmured a regretful adieu.

"Perhaps I will be down—next week," at a venture.

"Oh, no, please. We waited until the last moment, you see, and school begins on Monday. So next week I shall want every moment, every bit of energy, every thought. No, wait."

She raised her eyes frankly, and he felt he must have some consideration for her, outside of impatient love.

"Well, good-night, my love, my love! Oh, suppose you had never come back! I used to think——"

"Almost everybody comes back. You went, and returned," with a half-amused smile.

"Yes." Well, she was brave and sweet.

She re-entered the room, with his kiss warm upon her lips, and a color that made her almost angry. Then she went straight over to Mr. Hildreth, who had been conversing with Juliet.

"I have been alone all summer," he said. "I meant that Gordon should spend most of the summer with me. He was really tired out with his last year's college work. Yet it has been restful, there at Niagara. I was up for a week. He was living in the rectory, with an excellent housekeeper. He sent for

his parents; it was almost like a wedding journey to them. His family are all doing well."

"And—Westfield?"

"Oh, you will hardly know us. There has been a great boom. Two new factories, a branch of a big watch-making concern, rows of cottages, some new streets. Helen, I think you have been a sort of mascot."

"Or the beautiful school, and your perseverance and energy?"

"And the business part goes down town, for which I am glad. I like the quaintness of the North Side—we will have to call it that. There is not much room for improvements with us unless we stretch on further, and cut down our lovely woods. Of course the river is too narrow for business purposes as you go on up, and we must give thanks for that," smiling.

"And—everybody? Oh, now I am so anxious. I have heard from several."

"Dick Eastman is not very robust yet. I hope it will be nothing serious—the doctors are sure his back is all right, but there are bad headaches. You must see that he does not

study too hard. He and his father went to Maine for a fortnight. And Miss Ford is to be married. One or two others also, I think"—drawing his brows a little.

"Miss Winters, I hope."

"I have not heard that. But your friend Lilian has a position. They have been very busy registering scholars."

"That is nice for Lilian, although she has no real need, as her aunt has grown very fond of her."

"There, haven't I shaken my bag of news pretty well? And you must be tired enough to go to bed."

They all were, so they dispersed. But it was a long while before Helen slept. Had she indeed stretched a chain across her life, with a "Thus far"? Was ambition to be barred out?

They separated the next day, Mrs. Aldred saying that Helen had added greatly to her summer's happiness; that she had developed into the kind of girl she had looked forward to her making, and that she hoped they would find time somewhere to renew old friendship

by a visit. "I look to see you in some high place yet. I shall miss the Gartneys very much; they have been lovely girls and earnest scholars."

"And the beginning over again will be rather hard," said Helen sympathetically.

"Yes. But I must have some family life, some young people. But then, I shall have Grace near at hand," with a smile.

She said good-by to Juliet and the girls, and went on her way with Mr. Hildreth. What a dear friend he was! She told him about her visit to the great museum, and that they had not forgotten her father there.

Mrs. Stirling was overjoyed to greet her, and held her to her heart, her voice trembling with emotion. Lilian hovered about in a curious fashion as if she could hardly believe in the return. Why, it was a lovely thing to be welcomed so warmly.

Mr. and Mrs. Underwood came up in the evening.

"Why, you are not changed a bit," the lady said.

"I haven't made the grand tour yet," re-

turned Helen mirthfully. "Wait until I come home alive from St. Petersburg. But I have had a splendid time. My friend, Mrs. Aldred, knew some delightful people, by whom we were entertained most charmingly."

"And Paris——"

"Oh, we only had a glimpse of it. You see, we were so long in England."

"I have a letter for you that I suppose, according to the strict code of honor, I should not have read," began Mr. Underwood. "But it was inclosed in one to me, and somehow left to my discretion. Read mine first. I don't know whether you will pardon me for answering it, but having a claim on you for the coming year, I thought I might."

She read the application to Mr. Underwood, that he was to lay before Miss Grant, who had been highly spoken of as an organizer. The place was one of the thriving towns on the Hudson, and the Committee would be only too glad to hear from her.

The salary mentioned in her note was very good, and the case was laid before her with some urgency.

"It is very complimentary," she remarked, with a smile.

"You see, I couldn't send to England and get an answer back, and since you couldn't go, they ought to be looking up some one else. Your salary was raised at once to that figure, though I think it would have been in any event. Miss Grant, you are a most excellent worker. We shall never give you up."

She laughed with an emotion too deep for mere pleasure.

"I have hardly drawn a comfortable breath lest some wonderful temptation should meet you in the way, like a title and a fine estate being offered for your acceptance," Mr. Underwood said jestingly.

"Oh, I am not an American heiress, you know, so we were not in the line of gay functions. But I had a delightful time, and have quite fallen in love with English people."

They said good-night. Lilian was away on a short visit. Mrs. Stirling clasped her arms around Helen and exclaimed with deep feeling:

"You don't know how glad I am to get

you back. Oh, I wish you might stay in Westfield always!"

"And grow into an old woman? Maybe I should be queer and set in my ways," she laughed.

"They would always be nice ways. There's so much freshness about you; a new thought in so many things. You seem to bring out what is best in people. Why, Lilian is so different from what she was when she first came here. And though I didn't really want her to teach, I think it may be the best thing for her. But I must not keep you up any longer. Good-night, my dear girl."

Helen was curiously moved; thrilled, too, with a deep emotion, that her welcome should be so warm.

How dear and familiar the room looked in its homelike aspect, its order and cleanliness! Yes, she *was* glad to get back to it, glad of the quiet. She had been wondering how Westfield would seem to her after all the grandeur, the busy and stately towns and cities of the Old World, with their beautiful and substantial

points. But was it not the warm, true hearts that made a real home?

She was tired, and soon fell asleep, and it was really late when she woke the next morning, everything had been so quiet. Lilian had gone to spend the night with a friend, so there were only two at the dainty breakfast. Jane went in and out, and glanced at her curiously, as if she expected some great change in her.

"And you really were entertained by the nobility!" she exclaimed, with a note of surprise.

"It wasn't very high nobility," and Helen smiled. "But the afternoon on the Terrace I was presented to a Duke and Duchess, and the Duke was a small, withered-up old man, but the Duchess was splendid-looking, and not more than forty. I wondered how she came to marry him. And he was in the House of Lords. You know, that is an hereditary privilege. The son, again, was fine-looking, but said to be very fond of vaudeville actresses. But I liked the Waring men so much. Mr. Archibald is an enthusiastic worker for the

betterment of the poor people and the small farmers."

Her trunk came, but before she had it unpacked callers began to drop in, and several stayed to luncheon. Lilian returned and two of the Henderson girls with her.

"I thought I'd like to go down to school," she said. "It seems there are a number of new scholars registered."

"Some very nice people have entered," said Nina Henderson. "We shall not be the only large family," laughing. "A Mr. Field is building a factory and has bought the old Colmer place, and is building an addition on the other side of the hall. And they have eight children; two almost grown-up girls, and a son in college. He was delighted with the high school, and I tell you Mr. Underwood didn't let it lose anything. And he saw Larry in the bank. Mr. Underwood made quite a card of that. Mr. Field said he could not think of living where there were not first-class schools. And Daisy Field is hot to go to college. I like the girls. We've struck up quite a friendship. Daisy has been two

years in the high school of Medway, and Carol has just entered. Oh, you will have quite a lot of new girls."

"Do give some one else a chance," cried Meta. "Why, the town is improving in every way; and Mr. Hildreth and some of the men have wonderful plans. And maybe you didn't know, before you went away, that last winter in Washington our representatives succeeded in getting a grant for dredging the river, and the whole paraphernalia came up just after you had gone. They have cleared out and deepened the channel so that larger boats can come up. That's going to bring up more business. Oh, I do like to hear father and Mr. Hildreth talk. I like people to go ahead."

They all laughed a little at that and at the vigor with which it was uttered.

"I'd like to go down to school," announced Helen. "Why, I feel as if I had been away a year instead of one brief vacation."

"Let us all go. To think school will begin on Monday! Oh, Miss Grant, we're so glad you are to go on with us. You must stay here ten years at least."

“Oh! oh!” ejaculated Helen.

The rooms had been freshened up, some alterations made, two new classrooms put in order. Mr. Underwood was passing upon some papers, and nodded cordially. Helen glanced out of the window.

“Oh, how the ivy has grown!” she exclaimed. “Why, some day the school will suggest English places. I am so glad we Americans are beginning to think more of beautifying our homes and institutions. And the fern-bed is beautiful! Some one has taken good care of them through the summer.”

“Is England so very beautiful?” asked a girl.

“Well, there are wonderful beauty spots all around. And the country is beyond any description. People *do* take more pains. But, you see, they are not always outgrowing and moving. We visited one of my friends’ acquaintances, whose two girls were at her school—which really was delightful—I was there myself,” smiling. “And the place,—in England, I mean,—had been in one family over a

hundred years. There were such beautiful trees and wonderful roses, and flowers of all kinds. I suppose here a man would have cut it up into building lots to make money. He was a manufacturer and not any great magnate. I think middle-class people are more content there."

"Well, Mr. Hildreth's is an old place, and so is the Goulds'. Mr. Field wanted to buy the Gould house."

"I'm very glad they didn't sell," returned Helen.

Mrs. Underwood entered the room. "Girls," she began, "you will have Miss Grant all next week, and I'm going to take a little of her now. How do you do, traveled lady? You don't look worn out at all, as some of them do when they return."

"Oh, I didn't put in half the things the ordinary tourist does. I hope to go sometime again. We visited with some friends of Mrs. Aldred. And English visiting has a restful side to it. All of it has been enchanting, like a glimpse of fairyland."

"Well, girls, don't look sour if I spirit her

away. I want my share. As I said, you will have her later on."

She drew Helen's hand within her arm. The girls had a funny sort of surprised look, and one said under her breath, "That's mean; just when we were having such a good time. Miss Grant really belongs to us."

"I had to do it," Mrs. Underwood said, with a laugh. "I was dying to see you, and those girls are easily comforted. I haven't had a very good time this summer. We went away for a little journey, but husband was in such a hurry to get back. They've turned Westfield upside down, and the new people want their way. When they began dredging the river, it was awful. I went down to Cape May by myself. I do suppose I'm foolish, but I hate to be depending on myself. When husband says we'll go here or there, I *can* object if I like, but I rather enjoy being rushed off; and if it doesn't come out right I can lay the blame on his decision. There's to be an election in the fall for some new State senators and a governor and what not, and a school superintendent. Husband isn't much of a politician,

but they roped him in. I hate politics, and I don't want to vote. But what a time they are having over beyond! Did you go to any of the meetings?"

"No. We had to be careful of our time. But I went to hear a woman talk—a person I had heard about and was curious to see. She wasn't a suffragist, nor a Socialist exactly, but she advised the women to stop marrying; being sure that would bring the men to terms. I think the wives of the lower classes are worse treated than ours. And the poor, half-starved, diseased and deformed children——"

"Oh, let that all go. I'm not a philanthropist. I want to hear about the lovely, entertaining things. You see, it is almost ten years since we were over. And we just had the merest glimpse of the House of Parliament, though I believe there was something dreadful going on—a government defeat and a regular uproar, and we hurried out. No one asked us to tea on the Terrace," laughing. "I want to go over again—to England. We did Italy and Austria the last time."

They had been walking through to the house.

The small courtyard was in brilliant bloom. The interior of the house was quiet and restful.

"Now that I have you, take off your hat. You are going to stay and have a little social time—just us three. I suppose husband told you of the application for you. Were you vexed at the upshot? You know you *were* engaged before you went away?"

"It was all right. I really wanted to come back here. I am so at home."

"Oh, I knew you couldn't be that ungrateful! And now let us talk over London, England, Stratford-on-Avon, and the Wye,—and the Lake poets and the modern ones."

"We went to Shakespeare's home, of course; we should not have ventured to return without that. And we saw Marie Corelli quite by accident, we three older ones. We did not dare tell the girls," smiling a little.

"And was she——"

"We found her very affable, a really pretty woman, and enjoyed our call amazingly. I remember when I was quite enthralled with two or three of her books."

"I liked her fight and her independence. And you made some distinguished friends?"

"They were Mrs. Aldred's. Yes, we had a delightful time and London is wonderful. I could spend a year there and still have something left to see. Such a tour as ours simply whets the appetite for more."

"Are you ready to marry an Englishman?"

"Not one of them asked me, ma'am," she said.

They both laughed. Then they discussed picture galleries, and new artists and old ones, and what they really liked.

Mrs. Underwood rose to prepare the meal.

"I'm just going to give you everyday fare," she said. "The 'new thought' with me is the simplest way of living in hot weather, and the coolest things to eat, especially when one has been driven and worried with business."

CHAPTER VII

CASUAL AND TENTATIVE

"WELL, at last matters are settled," said Mr. Underwood, as he entered. "I'm glad you kept Miss Grant, though we ought not to talk shop. But that is one of the nearest things, if not the dearest, and I suppose you have deluged her with the town gossip," looking at his wife in a half-satirical fashion.

"Oh, give me a good deal of credit. We have been sojourning in England. I left the Westfield news for you."

"The Henderson girls were telling me of some newcomers. I suppose we are glad to have them in school."

"Six for you. Two who will enter the third grade, having been to high schools before. Mr. Field will be an acquisition, I think. He is a great stickler for education. Well, I ought not to say a word against it, seeing that it is my bread and butter and Laura's pie and cake."

"I am sure you are as fond of pie as the veriest Yankee."

"Oh, that was merely a family division. I did not want to claim all."

"Tell me about the boys—have any fallen back?"

"Larry Dinsmore is first-class. You never saw a prouder man than his father. And he is making a nice, steady fellow. Two of the rumshops down by the cloth-mill have lost their licenses. The Carters owned one of of them, and they tore it down. It seems that it had been a rendezvous for thieves, who stored their plunder there until they could dispose of it. A big robbery at Newton was traced over here, and they found the silver there, so Driscoll was arrested for receiving stolen goods; and they found many other things, also melting-pots. The Carters were very much incensed. The license was revoked, and the old shack torn down. Boyle's was raided one night and cleaned out. So two of the worst places are gone. Mr. Field is a strong temperance man, though not absolutely a Prohibitionist. And you may be sure

Mr. Eastman has come out strong on that side. The town had become rather lax, but when we were made 'a den of thieves' it was a little too much."

"And Dick?" glancing up with tender interest in her eyes.

"Well—I suppose it is all right; the doctors say so, but he keeps having the dreadful headaches. He has been studying with Mr. Boyd, though his mother took him to the seaside for a fortnight, and he had the baths. He grows too fast. I think you won't ever have any more trouble with him. There are two new boys that I mistrust a little. Mr. Boyd will be in the school two hours every morning and that will make your duties lighter. You see, now that we feel sure of success, we need not be quite so strenuous. There are two boat clubs, a tennis club for girls and boys, and quite a fine baseball club. Oh, we are going to be an ornament to the county. I dare say proposals will rush in upon you before the half year is over. But you belong to West-field, don't forget that."

Next year! Was there to be only a year

of this life she was enjoying so much? It gave her a sort of shock.

Then they turned to other themes; what she had seen and enjoyed. He was much interested in her stay at Oxford, brief as it had been, and in her description of the race that Frank Waring had insisted the party should see. His brother had made arrangements for them, and his class had given them a "spread," greatly to Miss Orton's delight.

"It seems as if they did not study as hard as most of our boys do, but they learn things with greater thoroughness. Perhaps it may be because they take up only the things they are going to need in their lifework. Real intelligence exerts itself more."

"And about the girls?" Helen gave a rather arch smile. "Are there any new poets?"

"Miss Winters seems to hold her ground. One of the newer magazines has listened to her plaint."

"And Miss Ford is to be married in October. I think she rather flaunts her happiness in her friend's face. They do not train quite

so much together as they used to. The judge has declared that Kate must stay at home for a year, and Mr. Layton seems nothing loth. The judge was very proud of having her among the first graduates."

"And in a few years she will have forgotten most of the things she acquired for her lover's sake," declared Mrs. Underwood. "Still the effort was worth making. Althea Barber has a lover; is engaged, I believe. I can't keep track of all the girls. I am not as interested as husband is."

"Your reputation does not depend on a widespread scholarship," he answered dryly.

They sat over the table a long while, enjoying the luscious fruit and discussing the changes of the coming season. Then Helen insisted that she must go, and Mr. Underwood walked home with her.

"Oh, dear," began Lilian complainingly, "everybody will want you. Mr. Hildreth has been in to say that he will expect us to tea to-morrow night, but of course it was *you* he wanted mostly. And auntie agreed. And next week it will be at least half a dozen

others. But I suppose I shall be busy too. It will seem odd to teach again. I wish I could have stayed in the old school, where I could see you and walk home with you."

Mr. Underwood had thought it a better discipline that she should begin among strangers. And Helen felt it would leave her more at liberty, as she would have felt a sense of responsibility.

She did not go to church the next day; she felt that she could not face all the old friends. But she was really glad to be again in Mr. Hildreth's pleasant home; though they kept to the kindly neighborhood generalities, and her journey abroad. Gordon Danforth had spent two weeks with him before going to Niagara. He had grown very dear to the elderly man, who longed for just such a son to be a comfort to him in his old age. There was something in a son's strength that a man could lean upon.

It was a splendid, glowing morning, with all the fragrances of summer ripened to that indescribable sweetness that seems a mixture of something regretted, something still to

come. The whole world was beautiful. She could see how Waring Grange looked; Oxford, with its spires and glistening windows; the valley of the Wye; London——

Lilian was walking beside her part of the way.

“I shall feel half-frightened, I know; though I’ve taught and ruled children before, but it seems as if it must have been in some other world. Well, so it was,” laughing. “Every new place is a new world, isn’t it? For you couldn’t take in the whole great world. I sha’n’t like Mr. Briggs as I like Mr. Underwood.”

Helen made a swift return to the present.

“Oh, you will get used to it in a week’s time. I am going to be a little strange, too—what with new scholars and the changes—but one soon gets settled. Take courage.”

The Henderson girls waylaid her.

“We’re so glad to have you back! We wanted to come up yesterday, but mother said ‘no,’ that you would be tired out. To think you’ve been over to Europe! Father has promised that we shall go some day.”

The throng about her increased. It was lovely to be so warmly welcomed. They seemed to have started early. She had almost to force her way through the hall; but most of the scholars were to stay there until the bell rang, and only the "Highs" could come upstairs. Miss Jaynes greeted her warmly, and the new teacher as well. A tall young fellow rose from a chair.

"Oh, Richard Eastman!"

He was slender, and not robust; pale, but clear-eyed; and the lines of his face told the new story.

"Yes, father and I wanted to come up last evening, but we were afraid you would have a houseful. You look splendid, Miss Grant."

"And I feel splendid! I've had a royal time. And I hope you have improved."

"I've tried mountains and seashore, and was glad to get home. I believe I really love Westfield."

"I am glad to come back to it, as well."

More than once she had wondered how it would seem. It was only an ordinary, small town, and full of ordinary people. Just every-

day life. Was there not something better, higher? Would not being out in the great world appear more worth while?

But this delightful welcome, these bright, tender eyes, these smiling lips and precious words—were they not worth being written in the book of remembrance?

There was not much doing that day beyond classifying and getting in line, and making the acquaintance of the new scholars. One of the Field boys had a merry, mischievous face; there was a sullen-looking girl, a Miss Boyer, who answered in the briefest fashion; but by noon Helen was her olden self, Miss Grant in the right place. For ten months her interest would be in teaching.

She went to the Underwoods' to lunch; there were a few new regulations to talk over.

"To-morrow, real study will begin," she said, as she dismissed the pupils.

She had not unpacked her trunk to the bottom. There were various gifts to bestow, some letters to write. Would she ever get to the end of all the talk? Westfield people were not running abroad every summer. She

smiled over the little touches of deference that one and another paid her; even Mrs. Eastman met her with an air of cordiality.

At the end of the week Lilian Firth was really pleased with her new position. The children were so different from the stupid, inattentive pupils she had known before.

"And there is so much that is interesting now in teaching," she said eagerly. "You are learning all the time yourself."

Letters and letters! Juliet was quite as glad to be at home, though the journey and the people had improved and broadened her ideas. Now she should be glad to go again. Baby Theo seemed to have almost forgotten her, she thought, but she was as sweet as ever. Home looked lovely to her, but there was much outside work to be done, and inside work as well. Helen could see the soft, inspiring smile on her friend's face. "For there are two girls ready and anxious for glimpses of society. I feel they are fast outgrowing girlhood. Wilma has a taste and a desire for housekeeping, and I am going to let her practice in that department. I am more than ever persuaded

that women should be fine and capable homemakers. Elma loves music and the baby. But I do not think either of them will be charity workers in my sense of the word. Are some girls just fitted for the home circle? It is a sacred gift and should not be marred. It is curious what diverse things we have learned from Mrs. Aldred. Was there ever a more splendid trainer of girls?"

There was one among them all that somehow puzzled Helen. Her meeting with Gordon Danforth had been very brief—there were so many around that he really could not claim any lover's privilege, and she was grateful for his forbearance. In a fortnight or so, he wrote, his waiting would be over, and he proposed to take a little holiday at Westfield. Now there was a new proposal. He had a college mate staying with him, whom he had coached and assisted in various ways, who wanted him to join in a Canadian tour that would take a fortnight or so. She had a right to his time just now—should he go? It was a fine opportunity, but there had been all the long separation in the summer. Why, they

had hardly begun with the sweetness of their sudden betrothal. There would be so many plans to talk over—was it true that their lives were presently to be merged into one? It was like a happy, impossible dream; that he should have carried an ideal in his inmost soul for years, and then have it prove reality.

It was an ardent love letter as well. Helen sat alone in her own room, curiously surprised at herself. Love and marriage had not been the dream of her girlhood. She had once said, to Willard Bell, that she was not a worshipful girl; her plans of life had, somehow, been set straight before her, and they suited her. She liked working with mind and soul and intelligence. Painting a picture would be irksome to her before it was done; the result must throw out fibers all along until completion. So with other things that women had chosen to do, working with inanimate materials.

What if she had decided to go to Athol? Women were coming to the fore everywhere. They won fine positions of their own. She remembered some of the arguments Miss Trevor had used. And she had decided not

to take up this question until—well, until she had won something for herself; position, mayhap, a chance for a generous salary; and, all the while, a freedom of self.

Had she been hasty?—a foolish young girl caught by a sudden rush of preference? She had always admired Gordon Danforth. He had been her girlish hero, when he gave up college to help with the family; then again, in a sincerer fashion, when he relinquished the chance of a fortune for the work he considered nobler. Yes, she did love him. But there was no sense in their being foolish and improvident, and trusting blindly in the Lord, when they had health and strength, and the way was clear before them. A year, after all, was only such a little while. She really would not have her work done here. Mr. Underwood had said “ten years.” She smiled at that.

“Of course we could not, would not marry for some time,” she thought slowly. “We have both a work to do that should be done by each person before our lives join. At all events, my duty is here now. They have been very good to me, and I must not pay back

in short measure. If he came it would take my time, and we are just in running order. The journey will be delightful for him."

She was not quite ready for the surmises about a lover. She really had an almost selfish appropriation of herself at that moment. And while the mood was on her, she wrote a charming, friendly letter, with a little counsel as to the future. And he must take this nice journey with his friend. She was very much engrossed with keeping up to the mark with school duties, and later on she would have more leisure.

"Did you imagine I was pleading for a marriage?" he wrote in return. "Why, I must find a home first, where we can work together and enjoy the blessings I hope God has in store for us. And there is the other degree I hope to take next summer. Oh, you need not fear that I shall turn out a weakling. I want it to be a year of grace for us both; a preparation for the kind of work we shall both be the better fitted for and that we hope to do, with God's help."

There were tears in Helen's eyes. Was she

really fitted for a clergyman's wife? Was there not a great deal yet for her to learn?

"I hoped Gordon would spend a fortnight with us," Mr. Hildreth said to her. "Did he tell you that he was going off to Canada with a friend?"

"Yes," she made answer quietly. "And I think he needed the journey. He has been working quite steadily all summer."

"And how do the new plans go with you? We thought it rather hard for you last year."

"Oh, matters are on quite a different basis. Still, I think the year's experience was good for me, as well as for the scholars. But I feel now that we are a regular high school," with a bright smile that illumined her face. "We have the four departments, and I find Mr. Boyd a great help. He relieves Mr. Underwood, as well, and I am glad of that. He has worked hard for the success of the school."

"Yes. I have known that all along."

"And there is no really vicious element in the school now. Not that they are all angels," laughing a little. "Sometimes they are quite

trying. But I *do* enjoy it very much; and somehow I am glad of the experience with boys."

"And poor Dick?"

"He is doing finely, but I don't want him to try to make up any lost ground. He will have to go moderately. It seems hard to be kept out of sports—and he is so fond of the boat clubs and athletic tests. He does row a little when there are none of the boys out; but he must be careful lest he should be tempted into speed. He has grown very brave about a great many things, and his father is the best friend a boy could have. I like to see them together."

"Mr. Eastman is a most excellent citizen. He will be put up for State senator."

"And that will take him away. I think Dick needs him more than the State."

"Well, we want some of the best element at the capital. We are waking up a little to civic duty."

"We are teaching it in school. And the girls ought to know a little. Englishwomen are much more interested in politics than we are."

"Did you get converted to suffrage?" smiling.

"Well, partly. Think what men and women are doing in New Zealand. And it seems John Stuart Mill believed it would be better for the country. Charles Kingsley advocated it, as well as several others."

"I'm not a believer in universal suffrage. There ought to be some educational requirements. It is a big question," and he sighed. "But when women carry on business and farms, and own houses and lands, it seems as if they *should* have some voice. They must train their sons better, to begin with."

"So many of these successful women are single," Helen returned archly.

He gave a low, soft laugh. Inwardly, he hoped she would have sons to train. Now and then the old thought came over him—but he could not mar her life.

There was quite an excitement in the town, about Miss Ford's marriage. Georgia Winters had made overtures, when the matter was settled by an announcement, and written her some really pretty verses of congratulation;

though she did feel, in the depths of her heart, that Mr. Layton should have belonged to her. Then she had won the second prize in a contest for an advertisement of a popular brand of tea, and been paid for a song, so that her hopes of fame took heart again.

Kate was to be married in church and have three bridesmaids. Georgia was asked to stand first, as they had been friends so long, and Georgia was really pretty. The marriage was in the early evening. Kate was in the regulation white satin and lace, with a veil flowing over all. The judge gave her away, and was proud of the fine procession that marched up and down the aisle. There was a very enjoyable reception afterward, including old and young, and the bride and her husband started on their wedding journey amid hosts of good wishes.

Then several other engagements were announced in the society column, Althea Barber's among them. It made quite a stir in the school, and, to Helen's disgust, started a sort of sentimental interest that broke out in writ-

ing letters and making arrangements for walks, or a row on the river, and laying claims to each other that awoke jealousy.

"I wouldn't worry about it," said Mrs. Underwood. "It's a sort of calf-love that runs its course like the measles. If you had gone to school with boys you would know all about it. It isn't dangerous."

She was very glad that Mr. Boyd kept the boys up to the mark, and roused them from the half-dreamy habit.

And oh, how busy they were! The botany class went out every Saturday, and they were making a large herbarium for school use, finding, now and then, an odd plant hard to classify, though each one tried his or her utmost. There were the ball games, and they had a great match with the Ridgewood school, and refreshments afterward on the tennis court at Mr. Henderson's in true picnic style, with no end of fun. Mr. Palmer came over, and renewed his attention to Helen in quite a pronounced manner.

Basketball came into favor, and there was an enthusiastic gymnasium class. Mr. Boyd

gave them a very entertaining talk, on Friday afternoon.

"Why, it almost makes me long to be tutoring again for steady company," he said. "Miss Grant, isn't the school more interesting than such institutions usually are?"

"It's like a small village," returned Helen brightly. "Everybody knows his neighbor, and, in a way, they pull together. When we have four or five hundred pupils, we can't get at the heart of every one."

"Miss Grant," exclaimed one of the smaller girls, "you promised to tell us about a house somewhere, in which 'Alice in Wonderland' was written. You said there was a picnic and—oh! do tell us all about it."

She had found that her journey abroad interested them very much, especially the different London sights.

"It's so much better than reading it in a book," said Allen Millard. "You can see the things so much plainer."

They listened with great attention when Sir Charles Waring was mentioned.

"Well," she began, "Mr. Frank Waring

took us to Oxford, where his brother Harlan is at college. It has a great row of buildings, some of them very beautiful. We saw quite a number of the collegians; and they called each other by such funny names, and no one seemed affronted. We were taken to Mr. Harlan's rooms, where there was a spread. The long table seemed set out with everything in the way of cold meats and jellies, and some odd things that were like our croquettes. They talked and laughed and told funny stories on each other, and asked still funnier questions about America; such as—if we still lived in wigwams and wore Indian clothes when we were at home; and had Indian dances—and if we bleached our faces on shipboard, they were so white.”

“Oh, didn't they know any better?” asked a boy, rather disdainfully.

“Of course they did,” laughed Helen. “It was only to add to the fun. Then there were custards, and tarts, and sweets, and ginger ale, and fruit punch; and healths were drunk, and then we set out, visiting the different colleges and a few of the rooms that were full of

cricket bats, and ball clubs, and walking sticks, and pipe racks, and photographs of almost everything. And there, at Christ Church, we were ushered into the room where Lewis Carroll wrote 'Alice in Wonderland,' and, I suppose, some other things. There was the old desk, chipped along the edges——"

"Oh, if you could have seen him!"

"No, he had gone to the other country. There were so many things to see, and such a little time to do it all. We went up the city to Magdalen Grove, where there is a herd of beautiful deer. On the top of the tower, May-day carols are sung. Then we had to see a boat race—and it was splendid. I have never seen anything like it. They went up and down, so that we should not lose sight of them, and then we had to rush off to take our train. It was a delightful excursion, only you need a good deal of time to get at everything. I did want to go to Rugby. Boys, you must get 'Tom Brown at Rugby,' and read it. I believe it is in our library. Even English boys and times have changed, but that is worth any boy's perusal."

“Oh, dear,” cried Allen Millard. “I want to go to England—to London—everywhere—but first to college.”

She was glad she had awakened the desire in so many young hearts. How proud Mr. Underwood would be! Harry White would make a mark somewhere. Mark was resolved to go. Archie Varick would have to work his way, but he had pluck enough to do it. And sometime it would be Dick's turn. The town was proud that Mr. Eastman had been offered the county nomination for State senator; but he had declined it, much to his wife's chagrin.

“I think there would be very little chance of success, the opposing party has such a well-known candidate; and I am not enamored of political life. Then my business does demand my attention. I am interested in the welfare of my own town.”

“I'd like a change of some kind. I've been so confined at home this ever so long,” she complained. “And the care of an invalid! I don't believe he can stand school life, and we shall have him in the doctor's hands again.”

CHAPTER VIII

THE GRACE OF ENDEAVOR

GORDON DANFORTH made a brief visit at Westfield. His friend was so interested in Dr. Grenfell's work that he pleaded for another month's stay.

"It is a good experience for me, taking up a little clerical work in this way, though now the congregations are dropping off. I do not believe I should like to settle in such a parish, it is too shifting. I should like to get into people's hearts and lives. Not but what the real congregation would need work in season and out of season, but they seem to have settled into a groove. There have been some interesting casuals. And oh, the brides! Dear, we shall not go to Niagara on our tour."

Helen flushed. It seemed a long way off. There was so much she desired to do. And she found such a comfort in Mr. Hildreth's

fatherly regard. She was taking a curious new interest in the town and inspiring the boys with a stronger sense of citizenship. Was it not something to the women also? Cleanliness, order, comfortable homes, children trained to better habits and aims. Other towns had been roused from their lethargy. Some of the newcomers had formed a Woman's Club.

Gordon had resolved to return to college. There would be time enough next summer to plan for the new home. But another friend had begged him to accompany him to a Canadian town, where he was to take charge of some work on a new road that was to make an important connection with two other lines. He could afford a fortnight or so.

"It is queer how things come to me," he wrote Helen. "We found matters in great disorder. The surveyor had made some serious mistakes and thrown up the job. The superintendent had gone off with the funds, and everything was in confusion. The company were almost wild and were sending here and there, when I made a few suggestions, and

they insisted on my taking charge; temporarily, at least. It was the old business that I had given up, but I did feel sorry for the poor men here who were willing to work and who had been promised a job for some months. I thought of 'whatsoever thy hand findeth to do.' Kendal was offered the superintendency and accepted it.

"A wild, strange, beautiful country, where men are making, as one may say, steps for a new empire. Great fields are to be brought under cultivation, new towns to be built; and here, a throng of men, miles away from home, huddled together in the merest shacks without the comforts of life, away from their families and the amenities of civilization, dropping into the worst kind of heathendom, and yet holding out hands to be rescued—to be saved from themselves. It is not simply the generous pay I have been offered, but the absolute need of these souls that are almost ready to curse God for the inhumanity of man. Kendal is a fine, earnest fellow. So we shall stay until the thing gets straightened out a bit, two months perhaps. It is so different from the

work at Niagara, with its refinement and fashion. But are we not to sow beside all waters?"

Yes, he was manly and brave and earnest. Her whole heart was stirred again. What if sometime—he should decide to go out to frontier missionary work?

How the time flew! All the homes she loved were prosperous and happy and wanting her, they said, for the Christmas holidays. Mrs. Yarrow was especially urgent. She had a surprise for her. And they desired to see her at the college. Some of the professors were staying over.

Why, that was one of the pleasures she had been counting on. And she had hoped for another post-graduate course. Would it be Barnard and Professor Zahner? She laughed a little at that. All the lovely homes must do without her.

Ah, what a flood of past memories rushed over her as the old stage drove along the familiar streets, and the row of buildings loomed up. She had seen so much grander ones. But these were dear and full of old

associations, for somehow it seemed a long time ago that she had been welcomed by Leslie and Lorraine.

Professor Yarrow met her at the door. There were cheerful lights everywhere, and his welcome was full of surprise and cordiality.

"Oh, send Helen up here at once," said the well-known voice; and she mounted the stairs, stepping inside the room, which was the sleeping chamber. It was large, and beside the bed and the crib was a bassinet with clouds of white lace.

"I hardly believed you would come; and I wanted to see you so much. I've lived last Christmas over and over. Didn't we have a delightful time! And here is my gift, though it came a little too soon for the day—my little son. Oh, you can hardly realize the pleasure you give me. And you haven't changed a bit, for all the varied experiences," laughing with tender sweetness.

The baby son of four weeks was plump and pink, with a little fringe of dark hair, and a doubled-up fist, as if he meant to hold on to whatever came in his way. They both looked

at him and smiled. The mother's eyes had such a tender, happy light.

"You see, this shut me out of journeys and all that. I wanted a girl at first; I was a little dubious about boys," laughing. "Now, this will be a new study to me. And all men like their name carried on. Husband is so happy here, and we have such a nice staff. But last winter's outing was delightful. Oh, Helen, there is so much to talk about! Do you know you never write real confidential letters? And there was your summer journey. Oh, let us sit down."

"And Angela?"

"She is fine and healthy, with streaks of badness enough to keep any mother on the watch, and she picks up knowledge rather too rapidly. She is having her supper now, and goes to bed shortly after. I have the same little maid, quite a young woman now, who goes out to walk with her every afternoon, and when she is in bed I go and say good-night. I think she didn't cordially welcome little brother at first, and isn't very adoring now; but I shall let love come by degrees. Then,

as the house is not very large, I do not keep another regular servant. The woman who does my laundry work comes in every day at four, gets my dinner, and washes up the dishes. We are doing the rest for ourselves. House-keeping is not so much work when you do not make it too ornate. I hope to remain in favor of simple living."

"You are an ideal housekeeper."

"And I don't see as my friends find much fault. They rarely refuse an invitation. I am keeping in touch with the outside world as well—only I really do not find time for bridge and a lot of foolish calls. Of course we haven't all the city temptations. I'd like a fine play, and an opera now and then. But having chosen my lot I accept its limitations. And I am very happy. Have you heard anything about Hamilton College?"

"No," replied Helen.

"I had a letter from Mr. Benfield less than a month ago. They began very well. The school was merged into a preparatory class. They found a Wellesley woman, who is doing excellent work but is not quite the person Miss

Hamilton would like for her aid. Of course it will be a success; there is enough money back of it, until it can pay its way. Oh, Helen, are you quite sure you did not make a mistake?"

Helen flushed deeply. Had she?

"Mr. Benfield asked about you, and if I thought your plans had been permanently settled. I understand that accepting the position as it was offered to you would shut you out of what seems dearest to many women—a real home. And you might not have liked Miss Hamilton's ideas all the way through. But she had a longing for some one young, who would grow into a friendship with her. Because you had no real family ties,—and I guess it was your personality as well," smiling, "Mr. Benfield thought you would fit in admirably. I did look at the position as one that would keep advancing you as the years went on. You always seemed to me ambitious. You have qualities that will surely win in the race. And it seems as if you should fulfill all the promises."

"I think you overrate me. But," smiling a little, "I had another offer in a larger place, a

high school as well. It came while I was abroad, and Mr. Underwood answered it. His heart is set on the success of his bantling, and now he fixes my limit at ten years. But—I cannot quite explain—I *like* the work I am doing there. I like many of the people. After all, it seems as if human nature is about the same everywhere. Westfield is enlarging its borders on every side, and several fine men have come in. There are some promising young people as well. There is a good work to do. I do think I have been an influence in several lives, and it seemed as if I ought not to leave it half done. A new hand might mar it. I shall always be glad I stayed. Mr. Underwood is a most excellent friend, and Mr. Hildreth would have been dreadfully disappointed. Then my salary was raised this year. It is not an expensive place to live in, and is near to most of my friends. Now I have some admirable friends. Oh, I think I shall never regret the decision.”

“Of course your engagement would have stood in the way——” Mrs. Yarrow said tentatively.

"My decision was made first. I had not been dreaming of marriage as most girls do. And even now it may be a long way off."

"Somehow I *am* disappointed. He may be noble and worthy of the best a woman can give, but a poor clergyman seldom reaches any high point, and you should be filling one of the finest influential places."

There was a step in the hall, and a cheerful voice gave a welcome before the hand could be outstretched. It seemed to Helen that the Professor had grown younger, his face had rounded out, and the cheeks had a pink tint from the fresh air and his brisk walk.

"I hardly need say how glad I am, *we* are, to see you," smiling. "I just said good-night to Gates outside; and I should have brought him in, but I knew wife would want you to herself. He was speaking of you, and I had much ado to keep the secret to myself. And here is the newcomer to greet you—at least he may presently. Why, we can hardly believe we have you here! Perhaps we shall not let you go away. There is a vacancy. One of our staff has had to resign on account of ill

health. We had two new ones, when we opened, to take the place of others who married."

"Even college instructors marry," appended the lady sententiously.

There was a gentle sound of the dinner-bell. Baby slept on, and they went downstairs.

Very little had been changed. A beautiful new vase on the chimneypiece and two fine engravings. The table was simply arranged, and a few roses lent a fragrance. It was like a picture in its harmony. The viands were brought in, and the Professor served noiselessly.

He was eager to hear how the new school year had opened with Helen, and she gave a happy account of it.

"And the poor fellow you were so anxious about last winter?"

"Oh, he is in school now, though he will have to take things moderately. But he has learned some of life's great lessons and is applying them. Two of last year's graduates have gone to business, and will do well. Now

we have enough pupils to make classes really interesting, and they seem anxious to learn."

"We are flourishing. In fact, I am not sure that going to college isn't a sort of fad, for the first year. But the laggards do get weeded out, only there is a new crop. You do the work over and over again. However, we have sent out some fine teachers and hear very good accounts of them. And isn't the true test of education the capacity of being of service to the world? It is more needed now than at any other period, to stem the tide of lawlessness and folly. But we'll let that go for to-night, and talk of that wonderful old world that rouses the admiration of the traveler. You had only time to see a little. You were wise to take it in installments."

"I think so now, unless one can remain for years. My first plan was a long holiday when I had saved up money enough. My friend and I were to take it leisurely. How many times we change our minds about our desires," and Helen gave an amused laugh.

"I went to Germany first, with a charming Fraulein, thinking I would have time to see

at least half the Continent," said Mrs. Yarrow. "I was a pretty good German scholar, but we went to only a few towns, and, returning, took in that wonderful Holland. We left France and Italy for our wedding tour. When we have been married ten years we shall try Russia. We have had separate glimpses of most other places. And you were in the Houses of Parliament. We only went through them."

The small maid came in, changed the dishes, and arranged the dessert. It was done quietly, and the fruit basket set within reach. But they were barely through when Professor Gates came in, much surprised to find his old pupil. Mrs. Yarrow went to attend to her little son, but the Professor asked so many questions that for a few moments they fell in showers upon Helen.

"It was a mistake for you to go away, you were doing such good work in astronomy. You should have made it a specialty. So few women are at all adapted to it, yet it is one of the most beautiful, most wonderful studies there are. I have the charts you made. Professor Anderson thought them remarkable

for a girl. Oh, Miss Grant, you must go to Norway; you should see the midnight sun."

"Life isn't long enough to go everywhere," said Helen humorously. "And then my purse might fail. Oh, why doesn't some philanthropist—wouldn't you call him that?—start a fund to take out those who really want to study the wonders of the world?—not mere pleasure trips, but for those who desire to do something with their knowledge?"

"That's an excellent idea. Government does send out parties sometimes when wonderful occurrences are not visible here. Yes, it would be better worth writing up than many of the wrong and foolish things we get in books. Tell me what you are doing?"

Helen gave a rather humorous account of her first endeavors to disseminate the fruits of the tree of knowledge.

"I suppose that gave you experience such as you did not get in college, only on general lines. And so two of your worst boys are likely to make decent, industrious, self-respecting men. Well, that isn't so bad, but it was pretty hard work."

"And it was work for others," said Professor Yarrow, with a sweet, appreciative smile. "Come, Gates, you shall not make the sort of woman out of Miss Grant that can revolve around only one ideal, like some of your wonderful orbs that get around once in half a century or so. Women ought to have more interest in the human race; they are built on different lines."

Helen thought of her father. His life had been of some avail to science, but what had he known of that higher, broader life whose corner stone was humanity?

Mrs. Yarrow entered, smiling and gracious. Helen thought she had never seen her look so pretty. She had prepared her baby for slumber and put him in his crib, then gone to kiss the rosy, sleeping Angela, who in the morning would say, "Did you come and kiss me good-night, mamma?" and be content, even if she was not awake, sure that her mother had not forgotten her. How smoothly the household wheels seemed to revolve!

"Don't let me interrupt the talk," she said.

"Gates is regretting that he did not make an astronomer out of Miss Grant."

Helen laughed. "I do not believe you could have done it. To make a few exact charts does not indicate a master mind."

"And there is Hardy's 'Two on a Tower.' Can you recall it? They both went almost crazy. There is something about the wonders of the upper world that is so mysterious, so untranslatable, so utterly unfathomable——"

"When you are making science and religion agree, let the churchmen dispute the points. We look at the cycles; the birth of new worlds; the ever-changing phenomena; the wonderful order that never misses though years may intervene. But a woman rarely has the patience."

"You see, she has to use it for so many other things. And they are dearer to her." Mrs. Yarrow gave a soft little laugh.

"I dare say there was some one to take my place," returned Helen. "And I want to know about the girls. How many have come up to fame?"

"Yarrow, let us have a little smoke, and

leave the ladies to gossip," Gates said, rather annoyed. If he could have kept hold of this girl he might have made a professor of her. Now she would teach school until some nice fellow, who hadn't half her real ability, came to hand, when she would marry him. Women were not single-minded! No doubt, Mrs. Yarrow had spoiled a fine future for herself, but she had not spoiled the Professor. Probably the children would.

"Yes, the girls," recommenced Helen. "Miss Powers will graduate this year. What is Betty Garnier doing?"

"Teaching athletics and dancing and—well, physical culture we call it now. She was a good scholar, too. I sometimes wonder if it is best to crowd so many things into a girl's life that she will have no need for; that in a few years are merely useless lumber that she is too proud to let drop entirely, but that is really of no service."

"But she cannot tell just what she may need in after life," suggested Helen. "There are so many changes, reverses——"

"And the systems of teaching change.

Every year I found the need of going farther on, of taking up new methods of the old studies. We will take chemistry, for instance; what a change has been worked in twenty years! Now, it has entered into so many things—the simplest, the most abstruse. What the girl learns in college ought to fit her for housekeeping, but it seldom does. She seems to have gained no elasticity in the application of what she has studied.”

“But so many girls teach. And a college degree is a passport to a higher position.”

“And so many girls have two or three years of society and then marry, many of them unwisely. They are not trained in the value of money as applied to themselves, to their situation in life. Economics should be broader, or else there should be a new branch. The same system cannot apply to every one.”

“Yet, after all the years as a college president, you seem to succeed admirably. Why, we girls were enchanted with the Mistress of Tulip Cottage,” laughed Helen. “And the children do not disturb the pleasure or comfort. Why, you would hardly know there

were any in the house. And I have not seen Angela yet."

"I resolved that I would not make my children the chief thing in the household. I have so often been annoyed when other people have done this. Angela has all day for amusement. She has breakfast and luncheon with us, unless there are especial guests. She has a simple dinner quite early. It is her supper. She plays about a little, then goes to bed. We have the evenings to ourselves. I have kept up my conversation evening, though now it is largely devoted to solving puzzles and troubles that beset young minds. I think how different the puzzles are from those of *my* girlhood, and how many of them are positively useless. We try to keep to the practical."

"That is what I miss so much—those delightful talks we used to have. Miss Morse was such a help to the girls. But I had only a little of yours. Sometimes I think I would like to study all my life."

"I think you are doing it, and will. All knowledge does not come out of text-books. Mr. Benfield would have liked Miss Morse for

one of their teachers. We were all afraid she might be coaxed away. But she is well satisfied here, and she likes being not far from her brother. Her young sister-in-law is a great deal to her. I am glad Mrs. Morse had even that brief experience of college teaching. She admits she has found it a good discipline."

"I am to end my visit with her. I have not seen her in her new home. Even friends have to be put aside sometimes for duty. And it seems as if I had so many that I could never get quite around."

"Miss Morse thinks she makes a charming clergyman's wife and is a true helpmeet."

The Professor bade his friend good-night and re-entered the room. If Helen had gone over her London experiences, she must begin again. He so liked to hear first impressions.

"No," she returned laughingly, "we have been talking—what the wife of my principal terms 'shop.' College—education—girls."

"You couldn't look much into the educational part in that little while, when there are so many wonders. When we are a thousand years old, we may have something to show.

Though I think we have made rapid advances for a young nation, but then we have had advantages."

"And somehow—we visited a good deal. Our chaperon, Mrs. Aldred, had most charming friends, and when our party shrank to the normal, we visited them. They were titled, but not dukes, or belted earls," laughing. "But through them we went to the Houses of Parliament, and heard some speeches that I believe I've forgotten. And we had the loveliest walk on the Terrace, which was alive with people, and enchanting with the river and the shore and the sky, catching a thousand tinted lights full of poetic mystery. If I was an Englishwoman I should be a rather rabid one, I know."

"If you knew nothing about the other side of the great city."

"No, we did not see that. Oh," with a look of amusement, "we heard a good deal about the suffrage. Think of their having agitated it nearly forty years ago, and such men as John Stuart Mill, and Kingsley, and other famous people being in it then! A Miss

Trevor roomed with me the first year I was here, whose aunt was an expatriate. She had English and Vienna degrees, and wanted to educate this young girl, who had an ideal of home and husband, and was willing to work and wait for it. She, the aunt, thrust out the ideal and wanted to educate the girl on severer lines and enter her at Girton. And I heard the aunt speak at a Sunday afternoon gathering that was—Socialism, I think, if it had any name.”

“What was the young girl doing?” asked the Professor.

“Oh, her lover spoke, and she accepted him. That was at Easter. She finished her freshman year, went home and taught in a public school until they could afford to marry, and has been very happy and useful, I think. She couldn’t have taken what is termed the higher education, and she knew it. So she broke with her aunt, and declined the advantages for love’s sake, which her aunt despised. She, Miss Trevor, is a fine-looking, impressive person, and her panacea—this was mostly for the working girls—was to refuse marriage until

the men learned their real worth; until they were willing to grant them equality, suffrage; until they were no longer slaves, helping to support their husbands and seeing their children perish for want of care and nourishment. Oh, much of it was fine, and pathetic as well."

"I should agree with her about the early marriages," said the Professor. "We have far too much of it here—and deserted wives. Our institutions are filled with worse than orphaned children. And among what we term the better classes, up to the highest, divorces are by far too prevalent. Think of there being a divorce for every twelve marriages! Though what swells the list, without counting in any more individuals, is the habit of being divorced two and three times."

"When women begin to respect their own individuality, and are able to provide for themselves, and have more satisfactory lives, marriage will not be the great aim. Your Miss Trevor is right about some things. How odd that you should have run across her. I have seen her name, I am quite certain," said Mrs. Yarrow. "The Englishwomen have a big

fight before them, as we shall have in the larger cities. And, like her, I believe in education. Ignorant men are as much of a menace as ignorant women can be."

"The world moves slowly, but it does move sure," said the Professor. "Miss Grant, I think you employed your time pretty well. And I must compliment you on keeping your youth and your vital interest as a true college student. That is what we aim for now."

"And we must send her to bed," said the hostess. "There will be to-morrow for talk."

CHAPTER IX

A JOY ACROSS DAILY LIVING

THERE was a cozy breakfast the next morning. Angela was in her high chair at her mother's side, and responded cordially to Helen's kiss. Jenny waited until the fruit and cereals had been passed, and then went back to the baby. He woke about five, and after an early breakfast, went to sleep again. It was Mrs. Yarrow's theory that all babies needed, at this stage, was sleep and food.

"And I never asked about your friend's little girl," said Mrs. Yarrow. "Didn't it take a good deal of courage to leave her?"

"It took a good deal of resolution to decide upon the journey, and it was done mostly for the twins' sake. But she was so pleased that she is quite resolved to try it again. Short journeys are not so formidable as to plan for a year or two. I spent Thanksgiving at Kings-

land. Baby Theo is lovely and bright and sweet. We are all looking for the development of some dreadful traits, but they do not come to light. Perhaps environment will prove the determining factor."

"That work is most excellent," said the Professor. "A real home is better than an institution; but we must be thankful for the institutions and their good work."

Angela ate her breakfast in a pretty manner that Helen thought quite wonderful. Then they went to the small nursery at the end of the hall. Baby was kept in his mother's room that he might have quiet.

Helen would go over to the college with the Professor. Oh, how dear and familiar everything looked! There were old friends in the library, which had had many new and valuable additions. She saw several of the girls she had known, and had a most cordial greeting. Then she hunted up Professor Blake.

"Upon my word, Miss Grant!" He sprang up with an outstretched hand. "Why, I did not know as I should ever see you again in

this mortal life. To think of your giving your Alma Mater the go-by all these years!"

"Not so very many years," returned Helen, with gayety. "And I've had serious thoughts of coming back for another post-graduate. There are so many new things all the time."

"Let me see—you took the freshman prize, didn't you? And you skipped a class. And now you are managing a high school?"

"With a good deal of assistance," she returned mirthfully.

"Oh, we have heard of you. We keep a record of the teachers who go out, and it averages high. We have had a new prize and two scholarships added to us."

"What a pity I wasn't a little later! I would surely have captured a scholarship. And now I wonder if you can tell me about a student who took a post-graduate the same time that I did, and who was afraid she wouldn't find a niche to work in; a Miss Carr."

"Miss Carr!" He took down the record book and turned over the leaves. "Yes, here it is: 'An unprepossessing person in the late twenties. Teacher in a seminary; gives good

satisfaction. At the beginning of this school year went to a woman's college in Indiana. Higher salary.' ”

“ Oh, I am so glad,” declared Helen in a quick tone. “ She was so afraid of ending her days in an almshouse, that she was ready to work day and night, and save, as well. She stood high, and I know you gave her a good recommendation.”

He laughed. She wondered if the freshmen of this year were afraid of his frown.

“ When are you coming back? There were two vacancies in the summer.” He gave a pleasant little laugh, quite doubtful, however.

“ When my work is done there.”

“ You'll be old by that time.”

“ And old people are at a discount? ”

“ You'll marry some one before that.”

They both laughed as she wished him good-morning.

“ Don't you want to go in and see Mrs. Jordan? She has been something of an invalid this winter. And the president had to go to some great educational meeting, so she stayed at home.”

They found her in her pretty sitting-room that was bright with flowers. She had changed a good deal, Helen thought, yet she was sweet and affable. What had Helen been doing these years?

"And you look as if you had been happy." The elder woman studied the bright, young face.

"I think I have been," she said, rather slowly. "I have had to work hard for some things, but they came my way at last; and one feels glad of a duty done, when it is influencing young lives."

"That is the finest of all. And if you can rouse youth to *its* duty and privileges, and set its feet in the right way, you have done one of the best things in the world. It is upright, honest, personal influence that carries the day in the end. And you went abroad the past summer?"

They had a bright talk about that, and of the girls who had come and gone; of merry-makings, and the success of a few who were now quite famous in certain lines. Then the Professor came in.

Wouldn't Helen stay to luncheon? Well, if she was expected back, couldn't she come in to-morrow?—and they would have another chat. Should she invite any one else?

"Oh, no, please," said Helen.

"I should like to have Mrs. Yarrow, but I suppose that is hardly possible. How charmingly she trains her little girl! She ought to start a new branch of home management—the training of children. Or does the first one carry off the mother's best energies?"

"Surely you have had a morning," said Mrs. Yarrow on her return. "Mrs. Jordan was quite ill in the fall and does not seem to recover wholly, but she expects to resume her pleasant receptions. The social life of the college is worth a good deal to the teachers as well as the scholars."

After lunch the Professor went over to the laboratory again. For an hour or two the baby was quite troublesome, then he dropped into slumber. Angela was very entertaining, with her pretty baby ways and odd speeches, some of them borrowed from books she had read. She could tell about the pictures, but

she liked those of the birds and animals best, and the stories where they talked to each other.

"I hear the birdies out-doors talk sometimes, and there's a little squirrel runs up and down the tree. Hasn't he any one to talk to?"

"I think he must have, in his nest in the tree. Maybe she doesn't like to come out in the cold."

"Did you ever see a great big el'fant? And what does he keep in his trunk? Don't he always have his clothes on?"

"The trunk seems a great puzzle to Angela," said her mother. "It is interesting to see and hear the puzzles of the small brain, and how many things they discover for themselves."

In the evening three girls who were in one of the cottages came in, and they had a very merry time, talking over fun and frolics. Six new cottages had been added, and some of the classes had grown so large they had been divided.

Helen felt proud of all the improvements, and the advanced standing. And she enjoyed



ANGELA WAS VERY ENTERTAINING.—*Page 191.*

her luncheon with Mrs. Jordan very much the next day.

Mrs. Yarrow would fain have kept her all the vacation, but she was not selfish enough to desire to abridge her visit with her other dear friend. Yet she was not a little curious about the girl.

"Helen," she began suddenly, one evening when they were alone—the last one; "forgive me if I touch upon a point where you have kept reticent. It is not from mere curiosity. But you do not act like a girl at all in love. And you suggested that as the reason for declining Athol. Is it broken off? Was it a mistake?"

Helen's face was scarlet and her eyes down-cast.

"I know a friend seldom mends matters, but she can, at least, give sympathy. Or I will be content—no, not content, but accept your silence as if I were wrong in my asking."

"I puzzle myself," Helen answered in a slow, low tone. "I was so taken by surprise. It was some one that I had admired from girlhood up, though we had seen very little of

each other. In certain ways, as a son, he had won my admiration, for he gave up a cherished wish in order to help his family. And, curiously enough, your Mr. Hildreth met him under peculiar and sorrowful circumstances. He was free then, was working his way through college and taking up theology as well. Even in the business episode he had appealed to me—we were at the house of a friend; Mr. and Miss Morse were staying there as well. It was a choice between a fine business opening and the life he most ardently desired. Mr. Morse influenced him, strengthened him in his decision; and I, in a girl's enthusiasm, ranged myself also on that side. He thought, then, that Mr. Morse was likely to be my lover. It is curious, but sometimes you meet a man who becomes a measure for all other men to you. Even then I had no idea of marrying—in the depths of my heart. I wanted my own life. I wanted to do something with it. Not to be famous for any special thing, though I would like to have had a real genius," and she smiled and flushed. "All girls have dreams and plans, I think, and new ones come.

I had planned to teach; there was nothing else for me to do. Any kind of office work would have been martyrdom. I wanted to deal with real people, to shape up character, to bring out the best of those I came in contact with; or, if there was no best, to sow some seed and watch for the harvest. Was I vain to have so much faith in myself?"

"No, you can't call it vanity. You were always willing to work for results."

"I've been very happy, too." Her eyes kindled and a half smile played about her mouth. "I have had some of the most delightful friends. I ought to be thankful to you and the Professor for Mr. Hildreth, who has been one's ideal of a fatherly friend. And I have been so interested in the school children. They seemed very ordinary at first, in contrast with the college girls; and boys were a new factor that I had to learn to deal with. There were three very trying ones. They were untruthful, resolved that they would obey no woman, since they had outgeneraled men teachers. And, at first, I think Mr. Underwood doubted my ability. A larger school

would have needed a man. Well, there was the awful accident to Richard Eastman, so I can't take all the credit for the boy's conversion. He had been drinking that afternoon. They all drank beer and smoked cigarettes; played cards in a saloon, unknown to their fathers. I think that stirred up the parents. And last year there was a great change. Some new people came in and helped raise the tone. I have made friends with the boys, and am interested in their lives. They are to be the men of Westfield presently. There is no large outlook for the girls, though a few of them may go to college. But good wives are as much needed as fine men."

"And then your lover came. I heard about him from Mr. Hildreth; at least, the episode with the Holmans."

"There was the old acquaintanceship; and my admiration for him. Well—I was as foolish as any other girl," and again Helen blushed deeply. "We made a sudden engagement."

"But you loved him? Why, Helen, you are not the girl to yield to a mere fancy."

"I seemed to have changed. I had prom-

ised to teach this year. I felt I was really needed, and I wanted to carry on my own work. It would have been a great disappointment to me if Mr. Underwood had settled upon some one else. And Gordon was in no position to marry. So it may be a two years' engagement. He wants to take another degree. He is already in orders, and has had quite a long experience at Niagara. Then I went abroad; and somehow it seems to have enlarged my thoughts, my desires. I have been learning what women can do for themselves—for each other—for the world. And it is largely the single women. Brave old St. Paul told the truth, that she who had a husband cared to please him, and that her interests were in her house. I wonder if all women are fitted for marriage. Some make a great failure of it."

"Why did you not accept the proffer of Athol? In ten years, perhaps less, you would have been one of the representative women."

Mrs. Yarrow always wondered why this had not appealed more strongly to Helen's ambition.

“As I told you, I liked the school. I had made some delightful friends. It was near New York, and I had not exhausted the pleasures of the great city. Then, if Miss Hamilton liked me as she fancied she would, I should have felt in honor bound to remain, perhaps as long as she lived. It seemed to abridge my personal liberty. Now I am free——” Then she colored vividly and drew her brows almost in a frown.

“And your engagement?”

“Gordon has a college friend, who had been offered a position on the building of a road that was to open up a fine tract of country and connect two considerable towns in Canada. He was not certain he would take it, but he wanted Gordon to go out with him and help judge whether it would be best. Gordon came to Westfield for a flying visit. He might be gone a month; then he was to go back to Yale and take his other degree. But matters up North were in the wildest confusion. The paymaster and the head engineer had absconded with a large amount of money, and the poor workmen were on the verge of desti-

tution. It was necessary to get on with the work as rapidly as possible; and as Gordon had been three years in road building, he offered his services. Then—I think he has a great missionary spirit—he was much interested in the poor laborers, many of them far from their own homes. After a while matters were straightened out, but it seemed a duty to remain.”

“And you did not like it?”

“Oh, I was much engrossed with my work. Then I asked myself how I would like to go out to Western wilds as a missionary’s wife; and I knew at once I could not find happiness in it. I want civilization. Perhaps I have a luxurious side to my nature. Oh, I should hunger for fine music, for the talks and lectures that stir one’s brain, for pictures, for travel, and the friends one makes. No, I could not be heroic enough for that. And would I have a right to restrict another life, brave enough to take it up?”

“Helen, that might never come to you. Why, in the crowded cities there is work enough to do for perishing souls.”

"It has made me think whether I was wise in so readily accepting a noble, self-denying life that might sometime consider it a duty. I have no right to mar it. Not that I am solicitous for the high places. But I should have considered. And I shall have to meet the issue sometime. Perhaps it may grow clearer to me. We are young and can wait."

"Has he gone back to college?"

"Oh, queer things are happening all the time. He was to be back by Christmas. A few years ago, Mr. Hildreth assisted some friends in a scheme out in Alaska that seemed to promise great things and then fell flat. He had given it up, so far as profit went, and was most sorry for his two friends; then, last summer, there was a sudden boom that carried it to success and enabled the company to reimburse its patrons. There were reasons why it was best for him to go out. So he wrote to Gordon, and was to pick him up somewhere. The Canadian company rewarded him handsomely, and his friend accepted the position, as they are to push the road as soon as spring opens. What will happen to Gor-

don next is in the hands of fate." And she gave a short laugh.

"A fine business man seems to be lost in him," Mrs. Yarrow said thoughtfully.

"Oh, his heart and soul are in his profession. He almost grudged the year given to his studies. But he had rushed through the three years so rapidly that there were a few more matters in which he wanted to be proficient. There you have the whole story. I have not even confided my doubts to my dearest friend, Miss Craven."

"Then I ought to feel flattered. But I think you look a little on the wrong side of things. I confess I did not approve of your engagement, at first. I wanted you to be in the very forefront when you married."

"You are very happy," Helen said abruptly.

"Yes. A woman can love as well in the thirties as in the twenties. She knows better what will satisfy her, she understands her needs. Mind, I do not mean the tired out woman who grasps at a home and a chance of rest. But when you have gained many things and gone up some steps on the ladder,

you settle to a curious satisfaction that is only disturbed now and then when you long for intimate companionship; for something certain, restful; a friend to whom you can pour out your whole heart; that you can read with, talk to. Your women friends marry, some of them take up fads that bore you. They have outgrown the poets you still love, or they drop into the new mysticisms that seem far-fetched and useless. We all change a good deal before we get to a secure anchorage. I had a good salary, a fine position, travel when I wanted it; and then the Professor crossed my path and we found so many points of agreement, of sympathy. And it merged into love—marriage. Some one has said, 'Happiness and misery may be applied to all women, but *most* happy and *most* miserable belong to the married state.' I have been 'most happy,' thus far. What I gave up has been returned fourfold in different ways."

She was holding her baby in her arms, now and then kissing its tiny fingers. She still had the delightful, intellectual college atmosphere; the fervor, eagerness, and vim of young girl

life; and they took on new beauty in the pretty home where she was mistress. Some of the girls, in Helen's time, wondered how fervently Professor Yarrow could love. Helen knew now that there were different kinds of fervor, and that the quiet kind did not lack depth.

"You had some fine years of single life, you really were ready to marry," she said, in a retrospective manner. "And I must wait until *I* am ready. No one can blame me for that."

"Do not marry until you can take another life into your keeping and do full justice to it. Half love is starvation to both."

On the whole, Helen was glad she had laid the vague perplexities before her friend and thus given them a definite shape. Must she strive to overcome them? or should she let them overcome her?

She had promised her friend Leslie a few days, and the time was going fast. Helen thought it always did with her. The visit had been delightful. There were evenings when they had discussed old poets and new ones, some of the stirring questions of the day, and

a few of the new novels. She felt the richer for her visit, though she had met only a few of the older girls.

"I shall want to see you again and again, Helen," her friend said. "Next winter we may have a meeting in New York. And you must come when you can."

"It has been a great treat," Professor Yarrow added as he put her into the coach. "We shall never forget you, Helen Grant."

She liked his soft, tender eyes so much. They had a smile in them when he looked at his wife or kissed his babies. His wife was very happy. Well, her life had been useful and enjoyable, rich in many things, and now joyous in motherhood. One's heart need not grow old.

Mr. Morse and his sister were at the station to meet her. It seemed as if he had not changed at all, but she had grown undeniably older, though there were no careworn lines in her face, which held its fine, vivid interest.

"It is only a little walk," he said, "but we will have a boy carry your suitcase. Here, Jemmy, take this up to the rectory."

Jemmy nodded, and showed a row of beautiful, even teeth against the red, smiling lips.

"I need not say that we are glad to get you here. Leslie was afraid it would rain, or that some special treat would be planned for to-day."

"Oh, no! I think I should have come in spite of a little rain or a gentle snow. How queer it seems to see bare ground everywhere! There has hardly been snow enough for a snowballing match."

"We are having a very mild winter, and it is good for the poor. Now and then Providence gets round to them."

No, it was not a pretty town. There were three or four big factories belching out smoke. The houses had a grimy aspect, the sidewalks were irregular, some of the gutters filled with refuse. Then they turned into a cleaner street, but the houses still had a dingy appearance. Here was a little rise of ground on which the church stood. A row of better houses ran each way, and one of these had been freshly painted. The pickets of the small courtyard were in good order, the path

up to the house paved, and there had been flower-beds on both sides.

Leslie ran out with a glad cry.

"It is only the gatekeeper's lodge," said Mr. Morse. "We have no grandeur, but it is prettier in summer."

It was homelike inside, with a great wood fire burning on the wide hearth; the soft wood-brown rug, with bits of green here and there; the big davenport in green corduroy; the white curtains; the library case that held the miscellaneous books; and the few ornaments that had mostly been gifts.

"I wanted you to come so much," Leslie said, "and you've never been before, though it seems to me you have been half round the world."

"But this is the first time I have been back to college. All their 'days' and anniversaries and celebrations come in our busiest times, and I can't run away."

"Oh, how bright and well you look! I think you have grown taller. Now you must sit down and let me wait upon you. It is a rather roundabout journey, and after you

leave Abingdon there are no drawing-room cars."

"But it was very comfortable and I am not at all tired."

Leslie would take her coat and hat, and put her in the low rocker. Mr. Morse mended the fire and then went out of the room, while the three all seemed to talk at once, Helen answering first one and then the other.

Leslie's face and voice were alike joyous. Certainly she was a happy wife, if the surroundings were not all one could desire. They talked of the class girls. She had visited Lorraine, who was delightfully situated, and some of the others. What was Shirley Bell doing—writing any more verses? Oh, had she two babies?

And she makes the loveliest mother and housekeeper. All the family just adore her. So it isn't always the advanced education that counts."

"Now, I am going out to get the dinner," said Miss Morse, "and you shall have Helen."

"She is so good to me, when she comes, that I am fairly ashamed to have her do so much.

She is the dearest big sister one ever had. We all liked her so much in college. Oh, the dear old days of study and fun and friendship! But most of the old girls are gone. I was there at the June Commencement. Several of them came back. And how are your friends Miss Craven and her two little girls?"

"Oh, they are young ladies and very nice; without any pretense. Then she has adopted the most beautiful baby girl, and talks of another."

"Isn't she ever going to get married?"

"She is in a great deal of charity work, and keeps so busy; and the two girls have been so companionable. She has a lovely home and plenty of money."

Leslie gave a little sigh, then she smiled.

"I've been very happy, though the town and the people are not"—she made a little wry face. "But Edward is so good,—and perhaps it is a useful lesson to begin in a parish like this. He has done so much for them. Sister sometimes tells how rude and rough and careless they were when he first came. But I must tell you a secret, though I ought to leave it for him, but he doesn't seem especially glad

about it. We are going away, in the spring, to a beautiful town on the Hudson, where we can go to New York in a little more than an hour. Edward was asked over a year ago, but he thought his work wasn't quite done here, and he was training some one to take his place. Then they asked him again, in December, and he accepted; but we shall not go until March."

"Why, that is quite delightful. And you will be nearer to us all—to some old friends, at least."

"I think this was very noble. There were seven young men in the seminary who promised God, and each other, that they would devote seven years to His service among the very poorest, and not seek for advancement. Three went to the West, one to California among the miners, one to North Carolina. Then it came out, rather queerly, one fine young fellow went to a real New Jersey wilderness, and in course of time, it came to be a fashionable resort. He was here last summer and we liked him ever so much. They are not willing to let him go. Then Edward came here. Margaret has told me what a dreadful

place it was. Many of the men worked on Sunday or spent the time in rum shops. The church was in a sad state."

"Oh, I don't see how you had the courage to come. Did you know——"

Leslie colored and smiled. "It had improved very much. Edward worked among the boys and the young men. And the women began to keep their houses cleaner. Then one of the big iron men was converted, and stopped Sunday work, and found it a great improvement. Afterwards he repaired the church and started a library. The women worked in the cloth-mill, and Margaret started a day nursery for the poor women who had little babies. Oh, yes, he explained it all to me. I could have kept on at college and we would still have been engaged. I don't know why," and she colored, "but he thought I was fitted for a minister's wife. But I preferred to come and help him with his work. I loved him very much. They were paying him a very fair salary then. And, Helen, I have been very happy in the work. There are some quite nice young women here. They pay better wages,

so the women can stay at home. I can see the improvement since I have been here."

Mr. Morse entered and asked about Miss Craven and her charming family. "And do you know anything about that young Danforth? We used to write occasionally. He took his degree last summer, passed his theological examinations, and went, temporarily, to Niagara, rather uncertain what he should do afterward."

"He was up in Canada, and has gone to Alaska now with a friend."

She was glad of the twilight that Leslie could not see the flush that went up to the edge of her hair.

"I hope he will settle to doing a good work somewhere, for he is capable of it. We talk of the betterment of the world, but there is plenty of evil to be rooted out and overcome. And he was such an earnest fellow."

Then Miss Morse called them in to dinner. Helen caught her hand in a fond pressure. How much benevolent work she had done outside of teaching! She was a very happy single woman.

CHAPTER X

WILL LOVE AND DUTY MEET?

IN the earlier days, "the keeping room," as they called it, which was parlor and sitting-room, had been divided into two small apartments. Mr. Morse had them thrown into one, the walls tinted, some new windows set, and now it wore a very hospitable air. The dining-room was comfortably large. Back of it was the study and the kitchen. A paved walk ran down the side of the house, and here a door opened into the study, which they found a great convenience. Mr. Morse had two different classes of boys during the week, and the older men often dropped in, no longer afraid of the parson.

They were very bright and chatty. A rather dull-looking girl waited on them a little awkwardly. The one Leslie had trained, with infinite patience, had married, a bare month ago,

and gone to her own home. Oh, how bright and cheerful it all was, with a dainty, home-like aspect. Leslie's letters had not been over exuberant.

Afterward some boys came in for a little talk and a music practice. They had very fine voices, Helen thought.

"You still keep up with some of your old studies, especially the music?"

"Oh, yes, and I have been learning organ playing. Then, when sister comes, we talk over many of the new things. Edward doesn't believe in dropping down. Sometimes I teach a few ambitious girls, but I don't think we shall have many for college. It is not needed here. They want the education that will fit them for the life they have to live. Not many can get out of it, so why make them discontented,—aspiring after heights they can never reach. I know we used to think everybody could come up; but they haven't the power. And they wouldn't like the high places, the rarified atmosphere."

"What a wise little woman you have become, Leslie. It is fortunate that so many

people *are* fitted for their environment, since most of them must stay in it. Oh, do you remember those two girls who came from upper New York and had been in a correspondence school? I suppose the one married her minister, but I doubt if she ever construed a page of Latin. Yet she probably filled a useful sphere."

"And if her husband had a poor, common parish, she would be very nice and friendly, no doubt; and she might do much good. We are not to despise the day of small things."

Mr. Morse brought in two boys, almost young men, and introduced them.

"Now, we are going to have a little singing," he began with a smile. "Miss Grant, you are to lend 'the beauty of your voice.'"

"Willingly. All the beauty there is of it," with a gay uplook.

The boys had most promising voices, with a certain youthful sweetness. They went over some of the beautiful old hymns, as they were being trained for the church choir. Leslie played. Mr. Morse and his sister led.

"That is very well done," commented the clergyman.

"Do you know any real songs?" asked one of the boys of Helen. "Something gay and funny?"

"School songs and, yes, some of the boys' songs," glancing up at Mr. Morse for approval or dissent.

"We get a little fresh whiff once in a while, but we have been rather serious of late; well, not that exactly, but reverent with Christmas music. Mrs. Morse, bring out some of the gay things."

Helen turned over the music. There were several of the old college songs that had a laughing ring in them and took her back to other days. And a few of the street songs were admissible.

The boys expressed their delight, and thanked them for the treat. They were really well-mannered.

"Now I think we ought to allow Helen to retire," said Miss Morse. "You two girls can begin your confidences early to-morrow morning."

"At daylight?" asked Helen archly. She felt girlish and frivolous.

The breakfast was not very early, however. Helen felt bright and rested. The room was comfortably warm and very pleasant, with a bit of lazy sunshine peeping in at the east window. Oh, here were some of the old pictures they had had at college! There was nothing ornate, yet the very simplicity had a charming, home-like air.

"You will want to show Miss Grant our town, Leslie, and it promises to be fairly pleasant. I doubt if you are familiar with anything just like it, but you may have seen iron towns. Half a mile below, the mines begin and the great smelting furnaces. But we have a Promised Land also, beyond the river, accessible only to those who have made fortunes."

They wrapped up and sallied forth. "We will leave the church until afterward," said Leslie, "and go straight down the street."

It was a little higher than the real business part, and, to the north, some of the old woods were still remaining. To the south, chimneys and smokestacks, long rambling factories, here

and there rows of cottages that, in the winter, looked dreary enough. Groups of children were playing about them. But for the river it would have been most uninviting.

“That is Anniston Park. The Annistons are mine owners. Further down there are coal beds; so you see it was meant, from the beginning, for a factory town. The Annistons, the Greers, and the Baders bought the big tract across the river and built themselves homes to stay in when they are not south or abroad. It is a beautiful picture in the spring and summer. There are fine driving roads, a splendid park, a pretty theater, a music hall and casino. Of course it is all private property, but with a permit you may enjoy it, sometimes by invitation. But the real living, working town is this.”

The opposite stretch of ground was on a very slight incline, just enough to set off the costly houses and magnificent grounds and the broad, well-kept streets. Many of the residences were closed for the winter.

“I wish you could see it in the summer. Then it seems a shame for the owners to be

away so much, and only servants enjoying it all. But our town has improved since I came here. What it must have been, seven years ago, when Mr. Morse first came!"

"You will be glad to go away?" Helen said in a decided yet questioning tone.

"It would be hardly true to say that I would not. But if it was our duty to stay I should content myself. There is so much work to do. And oh, Helen, I have been very happy."

She raised her sweet eyes, and her cheeks were glowing. Was it love that rendered her so serene?

"What puzzles me is—why Miss Morse always seemed so content; and, Leslie, your husband is a gentleman. Think how he was admired at college! How he could choose this place——"

"You know I said that all of the seven had resolved to do missionary work. You don't have to go to India or China for it," with her sweet, upward look.

"It was very noble in them."

"It was Christian," returned Leslie reverently. "Of course there were several churches

here—quite a large Roman Catholic church, and a Welsh Chapel, where once a month there is a service in that language. Husband has built a chapel farther down in the town, and the young man there is an excellent worker. So is the Mr. Provost, who is coming here. He has a wife and two sons, one of them bookkeeper in a factory. The new streets are wider, with a better kind of houses built on them. But there are still too many shanties, and now the Slavs and Polacks are crowding in, though they go more down towards the coal and iron mines.

The factory bells began to ring for noon. Crowds of people poured out, the streets were thronged, and there was a babel of voices, laughs, chaffing, arguments with a doubled-up fist that seemed as if it might strike, but did not.

“Oh, I did not think it was so late. How cold and cloudy it is growing,” and they turned.

It was cheery enough inside. Mr. Morse asked what they had seen, and was glad there had been a sufficient concourse of people to prove they were an active and thriving town.

It began to snow presently, in a sullen and half-hearted manner. Mr. Morse had to make some calls on sick people and was desirous of getting it over before the storm grew worse. The ladies talked of the new parish.

"I think brother has done his full duty here and has not been impatient for the call to come up higher. But I was heartsick for him when I first came here. There had been no regular minister for some months. The church was dilapidated, and the house—well, I had never seen anything like it. I spent one vacation trying to get it decent and comfortable. And now we shall leave it quite inviting for the next comer."

"I don't quite understand how you could have lived among these people and—well, not dropped down. Oh, Miss Morse, you were always so sweet and ladylike."

"But I didn't really live here. I had to keep the atmosphere—shall we say of courts?" laughing, "for the young ladies whose right was to the best. Isn't it our duty to make religion lovely? We have no right to drag it down."

Helen studied her friend. The sweet face had grown nobler. She had taken up the duties of life as they came to her, the duties she had accepted when she accepted her lover. How cheerful her letters had been—telling of incidents, sometimes pathetic, at others trying or mirthful. Always with serene content as if nothing were lacking.

The snow did not amount to much, but it grew colder. However, it was clear the next morning, and Mr. Morse took them out in a carriage that Helen might see the extent of the hives of industry, glad that he and others who had the good work at heart had abolished some of the squalor and ignorance.

“There was a terrible strike the first winter I was here,” he said, “and many died of sheer starvation. There was fault on both sides, but those who had the power might have prevented some of the evils. There came to be a better feeling when it was all settled, and they found that half-fed men could not make strong and useful workmen. But I don’t wonder that their souls burn with a great sense of wrong

that they cannot put into just words without anger, when they see the luxury over the river that goes to waste, while the ones for whom it is planned are pleasuring in foreign lands. Some day it will be clearer still, I hope; for we all know this is not the will of God, but the greed of man."

They were much interested in Helen's experiences. She spoke lightly, briefly of Gordon Danforth. How had she ever confessed the story to Mrs. Yarrow, she wondered! Sometime, when the sky was less troubled, she could confide in Leslie, remembering how she had shared *her* secret. Yet it had not been a real love-confession to Mrs. Yarrow. They were so interested in her experiences they hardly thought of other happenings.

"You certainly displayed good courage," said Miss Morse, "yet it was what I should have expected of you. And I think you really were too young to decide so large, and perhaps uncertain a question as that at Athol. I'm very proud when our girls succeed outside of assistantships, when they are thrown on their

own judgment. Yet I almost hoped you would come back to us."

"Oh, Professor Gates called one evening and thought I had made a great mistake not to go on with astronomy," she began in a tone of amusement. "I had almost forgotten I had been such an apt scholar."

"Very few girls go deeply into the study; not many are capable of it."

"And Professor Blake was quite delightful. He hunted up the record of that Miss Carr—can you recall her?"

"That quite dreadful body that you succeeded in metamorphosing as to clothes, and charmed her when she was ill? How is she doing?"

"She made a change, at the beginning of the school year, that was very much for the better. I think she will save up enough to keep her in her old age without so much pinching. I wish she would write to me. There was a girl something like her at Mrs. Aldred's, and now she is a settled physician in upper New York and has a sort of hospital where she takes in children—mostly the poor—and

cares for them. A friend keeps the house. And I heard that a young doctor was angry because she would not marry him."

Mr. Morse laughed. Margaret said: "Women are showing the world how useful they can be."

Then Helen recounted her hearing Miss Trevor, and recapitulated some of her arguments.

"She is right about the early marriages. You have to take the word of the young couple, and almost any friend will vouch for them. Then the foreigners often marry their girls of fourteen to some old man, and he misuses them terribly. There are so many wrongs to be righted that one gets disheartened. And the innocent little children are the worst sufferers. Why, Miss Grant, you have had a variety of experiences for one so young," said Mr. Morse, with a touch of admiration in his tone.

"I am so fond of the lives of other people. Is it interest or curiosity?"

"You can't help being interested when you have lived with so many girls," commented Leslie.

They were very loath to have Helen go when her time was up. But she needed a day or two to settle herself, she declared. And when she visited them again, which must surely be next summer, they would be in their new and more agreeable home.

“Still, I am very glad for you to have seen this, unpromising as it is in some respects. And Leslie has made one of the loveliest of wives,” Miss Morse confessed. “Brother has been fortunate, for I do not think ministers always choose wisely.”

Yes, it had been a delightful visit, Helen thought as she was settled in the train. Could she have contented herself in such a repugnant, discordant place? Could she work amid such squalor and ignorance? No, she could not; let her confess it. Then Leslie must be capable of a higher and finer love. Mr. Morse was a charming and refined gentleman, and the coarseness of it all was shut out of the home. But over beyond was beauty and luxury. Did she never sigh for it?

Well, God had this better thing in store for her, unknown to her, while she was accepting,

with a sweet patience, all the distastefulness of this life.

And if Gordon had his heart set on some far off missionary work——

She stepped out of the train. A man who had left the down train glanced about, curious to see if any one he knew was leaving this one. Oh, yes; there was Miss Grant back from her holiday, when she could have remained a day longer. He held out his hand.

"Oh, Mr. Briggs!" she exclaimed in a pleased tone.

"I am glad to meet you. I suppose you have had a nice time——"

"Yes; at my old college, and then with a college mate who married a clergyman. It has been very pleasant."

He nodded as if it afforded him satisfaction.

"So we will begin our daily duties again on Monday. It may seem queer, but I'm always glad to get back to school. And, Miss Grant, your friend and pupil is giving excellent satisfaction. She has the making of a good teacher, due to your training."

“And her ability? She taught in a country school before she came here.”

“Oh, I can see some of your ideas in her, good ones, too. And the boys we sent like the high school so much, though they are in a great hurry to get up to your classes.”

“I am glad to hear that. Thank you for all the nice things you have been saying.”

“I didn’t mean them to be merely nice. I’m not very much given to compliments,” laughing. “Oh, Miss Grant, you haven’t forgotten that your talk comes on Friday night? You ought to have something interesting for us. I shall be sure to come. Good-by,” and he turned off.

Why, she *had* almost forgotten. She had been thinking so much about herself in quite another direction. Something new seemed to possess her, and she could not define it clearly.

As she turned up the street leading to Mrs. Stirling’s, there was a sudden rush, an arm thrown around her, and a face pressed close against hers, glowing in spite of the cold.

"Oh, my dear Miss Grant! I've just come from Mrs. Stirling's, and I was so disappointed at not finding you home, for I ran over with such glorious news! And I promised to be back for an art gathering to-night, and I *do* suppose I'll be just overwhelmed. I've taken the prize!"

"Oh, Roslyn!" Helen kissed her. They had been cordial friends all the autumn. Helen had found more leisure to indulge in friendships. And she had been interested in the courage and good sense in which Roslyn pursued her art work.

"One hundred dollars; think of it! And do you remember the little turn you suggested about the spray falling over the bird's nest, and the coloring? That was spoken of, and I feel as if the prize was half yours."

"Oh, no, no!" protestingly.

"It was such a surprise! And you know they were at liberty to take any of the drawings; and the utmost I hoped was that they would select mine for one. But that it should take the first prize! Geraldine Stacy's took the second, and she is a real artist and took

one of Prang's prizes. I couldn't believe it at first."

"My dear girl! I am so glad for you."

Helen recalled the time when she had taken the class prize, and the tears of joy for this other girl rushed to her eyes.

"Oh, I must not miss my train, but I'm just full of delight to have you know it the first one outside of my own folks. I shall be back to-morrow. Can I come up in the evening and talk to you?"

"Oh, yes; I shall be delighted."

Then, with another rapturous kiss, Roslyn ran down the street.

Helen drew a long breath of pure pleasure. Had she helped, ever so little? These two greetings were so unexpected. She was going home to duty. Oh, there were times when duty blossomed out. It seemed, then, that there had been many such times in her life.

Mrs. Stirling and Lilian had a warm greeting for her. "Miss Millard has been here to see you about something special, I think, for she seemed so disappointed. And she had to go back to New York," announced Lilian.

"Yes, I met her," returned Helen.

"Oh, I'm glad you did. And I dare say you had a lovely time back there at college. Are you tired to death?"

"Oh, no. I'll just run upstairs and then come to supper, for I am positively hungry."

"I am glad of that, for we have some of Jane's lovely rye bread that you like so much."

"I've lighted your lamp. I felt sure you would come," Lilian declared.

The girl had grown so thoughtful for her. The room was warm and inviting. She laid down her satchel, took off her wraps, fairly scrubbed her face after the long journey. Yes, she would change her dusty frock and put on the soft gray silk they liked so well. The pile of letters on the table did not distress her; she felt curiously light-hearted.

They wanted to hear about her journey. Not much had happened at Westfield—one marriage and a few parties. The Underwoods had taken a trip to Old Point Comfort. Mr. Henley had been ill with bronchitis."

"He is getting to be quite an old man," said Mrs. Stirling.

Helen recounted the pleasures of her two visits that were so full of college remembrances, and talked of her pretty friend, Leslie, who was making such a fine minister's wife, amid surroundings that might dishearten other women.

"And she has all her college learning. What good does it do there?"

"All her life has not gone. And the place has improved. Then, they may go elsewhere. Mr. Morse is doing a splendid work, even if it does not show."

"I am so glad to live in Westfield, and up here in the pretty part, too," said Lilian emphatically. "But there is getting to be a good deal of the common element down below; we see it in the children. Though I think the big boys were pretty bad up here that first year. And some of the scholars have been sent home to be made clean. I just hate dirt and bad smells. My class are pretty fair, though. And you wouldn't believe how crazy the older pupils are to get into the high school. They think it a sort of fairyland," and Lilian laughed.

Some neighbors dropped in to see if Miss

Grant had really come. And, at last, she went to her room and her letters. It seemed as if they were from everybody; even Mrs. Yarrow had sent a closely written missive, and Helen almost guessed what it was about. It was too long to read to-night. There was the merry Christmas at Kingsland. Juliet had asked ten of the girls in the Working Woman's Home, who had no friends to go to, and they had enjoyed the feast and the music afterward. They had a fine new organist, who, with his mother, had just moved into the place.

She looked at the clock, and then at Gordon's thick letter. She had teased him a little about writing exuberant letters, and made her many duties an excuse for her briefer ones. Yet there was a little curiosity, and she took up the first sheet. She had heard, in a previous letter, that they had reached their journey's end.

It was a marvelous country, he wrote, rich in almost all of Nature's products. Fortunes were made and lost; there was gambling and murder, thievery on all sides. But what could one expect when the offscourings of the cities

drifted hither! There were fine men developing opportunities that seemed like pages out of the "Arabian Nights."

This particular enterprise had in it two of Mr. Hildreth's friends, who saw the way to a fortune and a wonderful development of the country. He had assisted somewhat with money, but mostly because he knew they were upright, honest men, longing to retrieve, in a persevering manner, some rebuffs of fortune. There had come to them a young man, well fitted for their needs, who had used Mr. Hildreth's name as that of a friend, but without any special recommendation. If they had made inquiries at first, Mr. Hildreth must have told that he had once saved him from prison out of a sincere pity for one so young, and a belief in his protestations of reform. When he did hear, it seemed ungenerous to disturb existing relations, and now he had disappeared, not only with considerable money but with a very valuable deed. He had frequented a notorious gambling house, and was a heavy player, they heard.

The money loss they could recoup, but some

improper use might be made of the deed that would work them much injury.

“There is also another warrant out against the young man for forgery. Fortunately, the check was repudiated in time; but these parties were swindled in the beginning and are doing their best to have him caught. Not yet thirty and willing to throw up the best chances of life for a little gratification of evil! The ingratitude has stung Mr. Hildreth keenly. Are there people one cannot reform? I begin to think so. He is so noble and upright himself, he is so ready to assist one in trouble. And now he must stay a while, until his friends are out of the muddle.”

She did not need, this time, to accuse him of exuberance. Indeed, it was not a love letter at all. More than ever he was roused at the thought of the great work to be done in the world. Would he choose some out-of-the-way corner in which to do it? Yet Leslie was happy in her out-of-the-way corner.

CHAPTER XI

BACK IN THE HEART OF THINGS

SATURDAY was really a reception day for Helen. Mr. Underwood was up in the morning, declaring he was not able to rest until he knew certainly whether her college had won her back or if some other important post had been offered to her.

"Oh, I am not in such great demand as you seem to think. I have had no offers during vacation, not even an offer of marriage," though she colored a little as she said that, and they both laughed.

Mrs. Underwood wanted her to come down to dinner. Dining out on Saturday was getting to be one of the fashionable fads, a genial old fashion revived. There were so many things to talk over.

"And Laura never squeezed you dry. That's not elegant, but it's a solid fact. You possess a perpetual newness for her."

"I'm glad she doesn't tire of me. Isn't life new almost every day?"

"Well—some days it is the same old grind," and he drew down his brows in a funny half frown. I wonder what it will be to you at forty?"

"Forty!" she ejaculated in surprise.

"Oh, are you thinking of dying at thirty-nine? Why, Miss Parker counts on seventy, at least. And I may last until eighty, unless you leave me in the lurch."

They both laughed at that.

Several other invitations came. Was she really so well liked? Then she had won something worth while.

Dick Eastman and Larry were her late afternoon callers. Larry well and manly and full of eager pride. Dick began to look quite like his olden self—but a better, nobler self. His thin face was filling out, and his beautiful eyes had a fine uplift in them. Larry was gay with boyish enthusiasm. If he kept on as well, he was sure of a promotion next year. The bank had given him ten dollars for Christmas, and his father ten dollars more, besides

various useful things. And on New Year's eve, Dick's mother had given him a grand party, much to her own satisfaction. There were getting to be such a nice circle of young people in Westfield. And the boys had been forming a debating society, to take up civic questions and, especially, the improvement of their own town.

"And we are so glad to have you back," declared Larry enthusiastically. "What a lot of muffs and roughs we would have been without you!"

She colored and laughed.

"There are two volumes of poems upstairs on my table, for which I must thank you; and I shall do it in a better way than this when I get a little time. You could not have given me anything that I should prize more."

Both boys flushed with pleasure.

"So I really have sown some good seed," she said to herself. "I don't think I need to be afraid of *that* harvest."

Then, in the evening, Roslyn and Allen Millard came. The boy was growing nicely and

taking much care to overcome his lameness, though he was rather delicate-looking.

"I had the grandest time last night!" began Roslyn. "You know, I never set up for a great genius. But I do love all the nice, dainty kinds of art work, and I could have steady employment at retouching and coloring photographs, with a good salary. And I've done some acceptable designing for children's books, and sold several very pretty flower pieces. And the Corby brothers took some of my designs for cards. But *this* was the cap sheaf, you know; and they made such a fuss over me that I felt almost ridiculous. Miss Chalford, who doesn't do anything under five hundred, was so sweet and nice to me, and said those things were the more remarkable because they won their way against so many competitors. Then Mr. Everest asked me to come down to their publishing house some day and see the firm; they might like me to do something; they publish so many children's books. Well, it almost turned my head," and she gave a merry laugh. "I'd been to the receptions before, but I never had such a grand time! And I feel now as if

I was fairly in the swim, though I know I shall never do any wonderful thing. But you have been such a nice friend. And you have encouraged Allen so much."

"And father says I shall go to college if I want to be a professor of any branch. I like literature so much; I am just going to do my best. Oh, Miss Grant, won't you be proud of us?"

Allen uttered it so naively that she smiled. Would she be here when they were all going to college?

They were two such happy people that her spirits rose with them. Ah, it wasn't always the large things of life that gave most satisfaction!

Lilian was much interested in Miss Millard's success, and thought that to be able to draw anything beautiful was genius itself.

"And at first," said she in an amused tone, "I thought I should never get those trigonometry things correct. Industrial drawing bothers me to death. I'm glad I shall not have to teach it. But some of the kindergarten children do wonderful work."

"Isn't it odd," began Roslyn, "how much *good* work is done in the world, yet how little that is high and grand! But I suppose there is a great demand for it or it would not be done. Yet you continually hear so much advice about not lowering your ideals."

"I think that relates more truly to moral and spiritual ideas. If you can keep those true you will always do your best work in whatever comes to hand, and not be sighing for the unattainable," returned Helen.

"I'm going to keep mine high, even at the risk of being laughed at," declared Allen.

"And we must go, dear," said his sister. "I'm so glad and happy, and I am going to take it as an omen for the New Year. I have a lot of work ahead, and I do hope, Miss Grant, that the children will do you an immense deal of credit this year."

"Thank you!" Helen returned warmly.

Her Saturday dinner with the Underwoods was rather piquant. Laura had a bright fashion of setting out the fads and follies of the life of to-day and wondering what would come next.

"I used to think I'd like to be in the whirl; but when you realize that you become a dress-maker's sign, to exploit new ideas that shall enrich manufacturers by the continual changes, and get Madame So-and-so's taste talked about—or Worth, or Paquin—and that you must seem to spend more money than your neighbor, it does seem ridiculous—now, doesn't it? Where is the opportunity for any real life? Husband, are we getting old and queer?"

He gave a shrug of the shoulders and laughed.

"And what do you suppose took Mr. Hildreth out to Alaska?" she went on. "Surely he has money enough to last his time out."

"He had never been to Alaska."

"Well, neither have we. And I shouldn't take the winter for the journey."

"I think there was some business. I hope he will not stay a great while. He is my right-hand man," said the principal.

Helen felt that she had no right to discuss the business, so she said brightly, "Of course you can recall Roslyn Millard?"

"Why, yes; the sort-of-artist girl who is working in New York."

"Who has a studio. Be artistic," said his wife. "She is doing very well, her mother thinks, and really takes care of herself. That is more than some of the sons do."

"And she has won the first prize in the card contest. One hundred dollars."

"Oh, Miss Grant! I wish she had been a high school graduate."

"Well—there is Larry Dinsmore—we will be proud of him if he keeps honest. And Benson is trying bookkeeping, giving good satisfaction. And the judge's daughter married. That ought to comfort us until next June."

"But the verse-writing girl—Miss Winters? I thought she was to have a volume published."

Mr. Underwood raised his brows a trifle, and looked at Helen comically.

"Harry White means to go to college and study law. Mark Henderson will go when his time comes, and I think Archie Varick."

"Dick, of course. Did you ever see such a change in a fellow? Well, I am glad we

conquered the three worst boys of the Ridgewood school; Miss Grant, the credit is due to you."

"Oh, not all."

"Yes, why not accept it gracefully? And you told me once you didn't like boys."

"I've been converted since then," she laughed.

"Dick's mother is trying to regain her old influence over him, which was foolishly indulgent. She gave him a big party. It seems to me some of the men have changed—improved as well. The new blood has helped. Some day people will quote us as a model town."

Helen spent the evening with the Deans and made them very happy. Then, on Monday, school began. She was very glad to be at her post, and the welcomes were warm.

The winter had been mild, so far, but now there came a terrific snow storm, lasting two nights and one day, and surprising the oldest inhabitants. The boys were wild. Such snow-balling matches! Even some of the fathers joined in.

"We ought to build a snow fort and have a regular Indian skirmish."

That was hailed with a war-whoop. Could they have it done by Saturday? There was a big, vacant space, a short distance from the school, if the yard was not considered large enough.

At it they went with great vigor. Even the girls helped some, for there really had not been any great out-of-door fun. Skating had been poor.

"What do you suppose I had better talk about?" Helen asked Mr. Underwood.

"Why, your journey abroad, of course."

"But so many people travel."

"Not so many from Westfield. I wish you had seen a ball game, or a rowing match on the Thames."

"I couldn't describe the ball match. I even get tangled up when I see it, though we did try it a little."

Mr. Underwood laughed at that.

"And won't the audience think that I want to put my own doings in the forefront?"

"Oh, no. You'll do well enough at that. Do not fear."

She looked out at the boys beginning their work but stopping occasionally to throw a snowball that exploded in a misty shower. A wild desire flashed over her to be out with them; boys did have such natural fun, the eager, riotous blood leaping to the fore. She walked slowly down the court, some of the girls huddling about her.

"Miss Grant! Miss Grant! won't you come to our battle Saturday afternoon?" shouted Archie Varick.

She nodded and waved her hand.

Mrs. Stirling and Lilian went down to the school on Friday evening. The walking was very trying. They had taken one of the recitation rooms, but before the hour arrived, they found it too small. Helen was surprised at the turn-out, and, for a few moments, rather nervous.

Meta Coursen played an inspiring overture, then Helen began to talk. In her mind, she saw a series of pictures—she always did, in describing anything—and she had the curi-

ous magnetism that made others see it as well. In all this there was no obtrusive personality.

They crowded about her afterward. "How delightful it must have been, Miss Grant! You *do* make one see things! Some people talk just as if they were reading out of a book," said a neighbor.

"Why, I feel as if I had been to London myself," declared Mrs. Dean. "I thought, first, I couldn't come, but father insisted. What an awful storm we have had!"

So it was, all the way out to the street. Then Mr. Underwood took possession of her.

"Do you know, or realize, that you have an unusual gift for speaking, Miss Grant? Why, even I could have listened full ten minutes longer and not been weary!" She felt the laugh in his voice. "I shall send in your name as a speaker for the next Institute Meeting."

"Oh! no; don't. For some one would want me at once, and I should break your heart if I went away. But I'm glad I pleased you and the others. I didn't expect half such a crowd."

"Nor I, either. Pleasant dreams of future fame!"

"Thank you. Good-night."

"I feel, like Mrs. Dean, as if I had been there myself," said Mrs. Stirling. "Are you not tired? You must have a cup of tea."

"That sounds very English. Lilian, can we get up spunk enough to go down to the fight to-morrow?"

"Oh, I shall be glad to," with delight in her tone.

The fort had no roof, of course. There was one wide entrance. The boys had poured water over the outside before they left school the night before, and the sun had not melted all of the glistening coat.

"Boys!" began Mr. Underwood, "no unnecessary roughness; no broken noses or black eyes. Remember, it is pure fun."

Mr. Boyd had been giving them lessons in boxing and wrestling. There were to be seven in each party; one had possession of the fort, and the others would try to oust them. They had drawn lots, and the Redmen were the successful ones. They wore their red sweaters

and a red band on their caps. The others had a blue badge. They were quite evenly matched as to size, though there had been some heart-burning about that. Cold as it was, there was quite a concourse of lookers-on, largely school children, but there were some of the men as well. Seats had been carried out of the assembly room for the ladies.

"What a silly lot we are!" said Mrs. Underwood. "There is no country, or principle, to gain, and here we are, taking sides as if between friends and enemies. Miss Grant, which is yours?"

"Why, I think if the Modocks gain the fort, they will—well, they will prove their prowess more thoroughly than by merely holding it."

"I want the Redmen to win," exclaimed Edna March, "because my brother is one of them."

"Honest, at least," laughed Meta Henderson. "My brother is in the attacking party, so my hopes and desires are on that side."

They had stuck branches all around the top of the fort to make it look like a stockade. The Modocks came on with a wild war-whoop

and in a moment there was a crowd of struggling boys, fairly rending the air with shouts and yells that would have done credit to real Indians.

Richard Eastman stood back of Helen. There was a glow in his eyes and a flush on his cheeks, and he watched intently. Helen glanced up appreciatively.

"Oh! Miss Grant," he cried in a low tone; "it makes a fellow mad to think what he has thrown away just for self-will and pig-headedness, and that he has shut himself out of the best fun boys have! Yes, I want to be in the thick of the fray. I'm dead tired of being a 'Miss Nancy.'"

"It is hard," she returned gently. "But we all honor your patience."

There was a tremendous shout. The Mocks had two Redmen and were carrying them off. They had no right to join in the fray again until they were exchanged. And now, there were five left in the fort.

They paused for a breathing space, amid the plaudits of the spectators; then they made another onslaught. This time the Redmen dis-

abled two of their adversaries, and lost another man.

"But the Modocks will win. The Redmen have only four warriors left."

"But they are among the best," declared Allen Millard.

And the "best" stood their ground so bravely that it seemed as if neither would win; but presently the Redmen took another prisoner.

"Oughtn't we to exchange?"

"No, no!" thundered a chorus of voices, and at it they went again.

Two of the Redmen were overpowered, and a great shout went up as the prisoners marched out. They did not seem altogether disheartened, and began to chaff with the girls. But it was a foregone conclusion, after that, though the struggle was bravely contested, and soon the last Redman was marched out, and the Modocks were in possession of the fort. They came to the entrance and gave a ringing "hurrah!" to which the audience responded.

"Now let's have it over again!"

"No," exclaimed Mr. Boyd. "This is

enough for one afternoon. And there is another part of the programme, I believe. The enemies are to clasp hands in amity, and Mrs. Bradley has been making some coffee in the school kitchen and begs you to come in out of the cold, and warm up. And I believe there is some sleigh riding on the tapis."

A tremendous cheer went up, and they were crowding into the room, snuffing up the fragrance of the coffee, when the jingling of bells smote on their ears. Mr. Eastman and Mr. Henderson had planned the impromptu ride. Martin had come down with Mr. Hildreth's big sleigh; the one at the livery, used for taking out parties, had been engaged; and there were various smaller ones.

"Miss Grant is going with us," announced Dick.

"Oh! oh! oh! That isn't fair! We want Miss Grant in the big sleigh!"

"You must do without her this time."

They were bundled in, and wrapped in rugs and blankets. Some of the younger ones had to be left behind for the next time. The roads were just broken, and it seemed as if the air

was growing warmer. The sun was sending rays and drifts of opaline splendor, the precursor of coming sunset. If they could not have Miss Grant in the big sleigh, they had Miss Jaynes and Lilian and Mr. Boyd, who started some school songs that fairly made the air ring.

"Eastman, I don't know how to thank you and Henderson for this pleasure," said Mr. Underwood, "and for the interest you and others are taking in the school. It is such an encouragement to us teachers to find our efforts appreciated. I have always maintained that the fathers had a great deal to do with forming the boys' characters in the transition stage. The teacher can't do it all."

"My boy and I have learned that," returned Mr. Eastman in a fervent tone.

"And since parents have an ownership in the child and are responsible to the State for its future citizens, I think we should take our duties more seriously and be what help we can."

How they skimmed over the ground! Helen felt the exhilaration in every nerve. It seemed

as if she came back to her olden self, and the perplexing moods drifted away.

On the return they dropped the children here and there.

"I've had such a splendid time," Allen Millard said to Helen. "I did want to be in that fray, but of course I knew I couldn't."

"We'll shake hands," said Dick cordially. "I'm in the same boat, but mine was my own fault. But we can be good students and good scholars for all that."

Allen had always had a little fear of Dick. Now he squeezed his hand and smiled.

The boys planned another battle for next Saturday. The Redmen were sure they would win if they were the attacking party. But alas! Friday evening it started in rainy, and there was a warm atmosphere, with a down-pour. But when it did clear, there was splendid skating and a magnificent full moon. Miss Grant had to join some of the skating parties.

Then there came almost a shock to Westfield. The county superintendent had resigned, the first of the year, to accept a very promising position at the West. There had been a num-

ber of applications, most of them declined, and now the committee had requested that Mr. Underwood should allow his name to be put in nomination, with the almost certainty of gaining the appointment. They were much pleased with his way of managing the new high school and with his executive ability generally.

"There, Mrs. Underwood, read that and feel complimented," and he handed the letter to his wife.

She perused it, and then studied him. "Well, what will you do? Shall I give you the advice Consider Miller gave his cow?" amusement gleaming from her eyes.

"What would you like—a change?"

"Oh, to tell the truth, I am not very fond of changes. We have a nice home and garden here, and some of the new people that have come in are a great acquisition. I think you feel more restful, and certainly you *are* appreciated. It would be a kind of new life; and now you can take your ease a little. It depends a good deal on whether there is money enough to pay for the added work and anxiety.

For you would be wanting to bring the schools up to your standard. And teachers are not always tractable."

"I've worked hard for this high school, and had one fine friend back of me. Now I have three. I never imagined Mr. Eastman would show so much public spirit, so much interest in education. But I couldn't have done it alone or with inefficient support. Miss Grant deserves a great deal of the credit. And though I'm not much in favor of women holding offices, six or eight years from this she would make a fine superintendent. By that time, I suppose, women will be voting."

"I want Miss Grant to marry. After all—Mr. Hildreth would make any woman a splendid husband, and then he would give up roaming about. Yet it didn't quite meet my ideas, either. Some one young and vigorous, who has ambition and can make his mark. I don't just know—I haven't seen the man yet," and a queer, doubtful smile crossed her face.

"Teaching wears on so many of the younger women. You see so many tired faces at the Institutes."

"Miss Grant has some gift, or strength, or grace that lifts her above that," returned Mr. Underwood.

"But she is young yet."

"And her influence over young people is beneficial. Then, somehow, the mothers seem won by her also. Even Mrs. Eastman, I notice, meets her in a most agreeable fashion. Mr. Eastman thinks she has been the salvation of Dick—well, even now she keeps up his spirits. He has a tendency towards depression, though I don't wonder at it. And she seems to stimulate the children to do their utmost and take pride in their standing. When you can inspire them with that half the battle is won."

"Any other woman would be jealous," she said laughingly.

"You think more of your husband's success. Well—what shall this be? There would be a higher salary, a good deal of traveling about. Here I can work out my own plans; there I should have a dozen different people to suit, no end of complaints, be advanced a little higher in social standing—find

a still better position, like Mr. Brewer. To tell the truth, I never considered him just the man for the place. But perhaps that may be said about me."

"Oh, I see you don't want to change."

"No, I do not. That is the truth. Ten years from this time Westfield will be a really fine place. I ought to reap and enjoy some of its prosperity."

"Then do not go. I think it would break Mr. Hildreth's heart."

"I wonder why we do not hear. That Alaska business proves very bothersome. I hope he doesn't lose money in it. Why, he ought to be back home."

"As I said—I shall be content. Though we might not have to move."

"There are larger towns than this in the county. Lancaster holds its head high. Mr. Brewer lived there, and it is more central."

"You do not have to decide to-night."

"I might consult Miss Grant to-morrow," and a glint of mischief flashed in his eyes.

"Would she stay under a new principal?"

"Oh, where could I find him!" in mock

desperation. "Men, as a general thing, do not like a superior."

"So you see how perplexities would accumulate. Sleep on it, dream on it, and, as I said,—consider whether it is worth while. And oh, husband, it is a great deal better to decline than to be declined. Now I want to read this foolish novel to settle my mind. The girl can't decide between two lovers. We will talk this matter over to-morrow."

CHAPTER XII

ONE END OF A THREAD

SEVERAL days passed. Helen was full of ambition for her class. It was not always clear sailing. There were boys bubbling over with mischief, there were sentimental girls and self-willed ones; but she summoned some of her past experiences, when she was a girl among other girls. How she seemed to have left those years behind! Occasionally she felt quite like another person, and took pride in her own development. It was not vanity; she understood her own capabilities, and she felt there were fewer limitations than she had once believed.

After school was dismissed one afternoon, Mr. Underwood came up to her room. She had stopped to write a letter.

"I'd like you to read this," he said, laying his missive on her desk.

"Why, it is from——" glancing up.
"Isn't it private business?"

"It might have been a week ago," touched by her delicacy.

She read it slowly, considering within herself.

"You will accept it?" in a tentative fashion.

"Would you advise me to?"

"Why——" She studied his face. His eyes were rather mirthful. "It is very complimentary, when there were so many other applicants—quite urgent, indeed. I suppose it is higher up in the social and intellectual scale, and," smiling, "means more salary. Oh, I can't really advise you, because I should be sorry——"

"The matter was decided on the second day. You see, they had to have an answer at once."

"Oh, you are not going," she said quickly, with a radiant face.

"You have guessed right."

"I think you have been very noble about it. No one could blame you for accepting. I suppose the office is held in high esteem."



"OH, YOU ARE NOT GOING!"—Page 260.

He laughed. "I rather think Mrs. Underwood had a hand in it; for, like a good husband, I took her into account. You have never been to Lancaster. The Institutes used to be held there always, but Mr. Brewer thought it better to divide them around. Lancaster, besides being the county town, is about two hundred years old, stiff and aristocratic, but it is nearly in the center of the county and accessible from all points. It is a really elegant place, with broad streets, a beautiful little park, fine houses and grounds. Laura was quite sure she could never feel at home there. They have a fine large high school, churches for every denomination, a club house, a hall for lectures and concerts. There is not much real business. I think a big factory would shock everybody. When court sits, the place is busy. There is also a university, devoted mostly to law and theology. Mrs. Underwood is really attached to Westfield and to Mr. Hildreth."

"And you declined?"

"I like teaching. I like tussles with boys. I enjoy a place that isn't fenced in and white-

washed; that isn't finished, and can improve. And you would hardly believe how much it has improved since I came here. Then I think it would give greater satisfaction to have a man from a distance. I should be picked to pieces; I should fight for progression and improvement, and it is hard getting most people out of their ruts."

"Oh, I am very, very glad!" she exclaimed unaffectedly. "And you *are* doing a good work here."

"And running races with Ridgewood," laughing. "We shall catch up and go ahead. You don't know how much good the training of their three bad boys has done us. Dinsmore is giving excellent satisfaction in the bank. Every one couldn't have taken advantage of Dick's accident as you did. And I know he was leader in that shameful Halloween affair."

"You see, the others were not quite so bad, and being without a leader, they were the more easily managed. Then Dick's accident was like a warning."

"It is very gratifying for all of you to

desire me to remain where I am. Even Miss Parker was really enthusiastic—though we have always been excellent friends. I want the good will and assistance of my teachers. I hope we will get a good superintendent. Mr. Brewer has antagonized some of the best teachers. Conover was in last evening, and had heard a whisper about it; not from me, however. So I suppose it will be a bit of news for Westfield to gloat over,” smiling. “But I wanted the pleasure of telling you myself.”

“Oh, thank you,” and the depth of her tone pleased him.

“By the way, have you heard from Mr. Hildreth? I have not had a word since he went to Alaska. There was some trouble, some business on hand, he suggested.”

“No. I have not heard from him lately,” which was true enough. And Gordon’s letters had been rather puzzling.

Westfield was proud of having had a chance at the county superintendent, but delighted that Mr. Underwood had decided to remain with them.

"Lancaster would have expected us to live there," Mrs. Underwood said to Helen. "And moving is such an awful task, when you have every nook and corner full and books stored everywhere. Westfield is a sort of homey, chatty place. I don't mean gossipy altogether, but people *do* take an interest in each other. I think we need a minister's wife to be a kind of center for the young people. But Mr. Henley is too old to think of marrying again. Our young people stray off to the other churches. Do you notice how many of the boys run after Mr. Boyd? He is a great attraction to them. Why, the little chapel is crowded evenings. No, I don't like Lancaster. The foundation stones are the great, great grandfathers."

Helen laughed at that.

"And every front lawn is just like every other. The same kind of blooming shrubbery and roses. And if Mrs. Starkweather sets out a bed of red geraniums, every one follows suit. *I'd* try to get some blue ones."

"I never heard of blue geraniums."

"Then mine would be new, and set every-

body envying. There is larkspur, and chickory has a blue flower, and blue hyderangeas, and there's the pretty, delicate flax. And the next summer I'd have something different again. I should come to hate a place where everything was cut and dried." Then, after a moment, she said anxiously, "Have you heard from Mr. Hildreth? Husband is worried about him. What a wild-goose chase, to go out to Alaska in the winter."

"No," Helen answered quietly. "But he went on some business."

"As if there was not enough business near at hand, that one must run half over the world! Now if husband *had* wanted an adviser about this superintendency business, where would he have gone? And if he had decided for it, think what an awful disappointment it would have been to Mr. Hildreth."

Helen gave a little sigh of relief at the escape.

What with the rain and two rather mild days, the fort needed patching up. It made quite a playhouse for the younger children. So it was a fortnight before they had their

next battle, which was so strenuously contested that twilight bid fair to overtake them before it was decided. Then it was admitted that the inside party stood the best chance.

"No one invites us to coffee to-day, or treats us to a sleigh ride. We are neglected and deserted by our friends," declared a boy lugubriously.

"Then let's quit. We stand three to three."

They threw up their caps and hurrahed. And the next week they made a fire inside the fort and battered it down.

Helen read over the last brief note from Gordon Danforth. They had captured the traitor and defaulter, but it had ended in a tragedy. He had turned the last ball in his pistol upon himself. Mr. Hildreth had begged for a little leniency, but had been overruled by other parties who had lost more by the shifty double-dealing. "A young fellow, barely two years older than I, whose first misstep had been forgiven," wrote Gordon. "And for a few years he seemed to go on all right, and won the confidence of those who employed him. Then the mania for gambling

overpowered him and he went wild. They have recovered the missing deed, and, it is thought, will be able to recoup their losses. But it has been a great blow to Mr. Hildreth, and the climate has been hard on him. We are going to Southern California to recruit. I shall be quite a famous traveler by the time I return."

Did she miss the old, overflowing tenderness out of the letter? Then she wondered whether he was ceasing to care. What if she should have her own life to herself after all! Had she really wished it? Had she chafed at the thought of surrendering the power of her personal capacity; of being merged into another life, when she could do so well for herself? Not that she had in any way resolved to break the tie, only to put it off until—until what? When she was tired of herself and her work?—when the sweetness of power over other lives and souls began to pall? Perhaps she was not necessary to his life—Miss Trevor had pointed out the mistake of a woman's thinking herself necessary to any man!

She had thrust aside Mrs. Yarrow's letter,

written so long ago, hardly having the courage to destroy it. The correspondence was following general lines—Angela and the baby, the happy, restful home, the college girls, the news of the day—but the old chiding and the counsel had dropped out. But one sentence haunted her. “Unless you love with a deeper, holier, more soul-giving affection, you have no right to marry any man.”

Then came back the beautiful solemn betrothal. Was it a thing to be lightly held? What had drifted her away from that satisfying haven?

But these were busy times, and she was so tired with the day's work that she thrust aside her own perplexities. Mid-winter examinations, promotions that gratified her—Mr. Underwood as well. Would it not be selfish to step out of this useful, earnest, satisfying life? For her whole soul was imbued with the desire of being useful; of bringing every gift of nature and study to some purpose that should bear fruit. That was what life was given for.

Not that Helen was growing pedantic, or pragmatic, or unduly fond of her own opinion.

She had so just an estimate of herself. And she *had* been a success thus far. She was an excellent speaker, clear and vigorous, having her forces always in order. Many women were coming to be a power in the world. Some of the college teachers gave admirable lectures. She was in no hurry to rush out into the world's arena, but in years to come——

She had gone to the city one Saturday to take lunch with her friend, Mrs. Osborne; to meet Juliet, and hear a delightful singer. They had gone afterward to a rather dainty and select restaurant, and talked over affairs at Kingsland.

The new organist, a young man of much ability, who had already shown some skill in composing, had become very friendly with them all, and quite pronounced in his attentions to Wilma. His mother had bought a pretty cottage in the vicinity and was considered quite an acquisition to society.

“Wilma seems such a child yet. I had hoped for a year or two of free and happy girl life with no question of lovers, and have treated the matter in the friendliest manner,

avoiding any opportunity of a discussion on the subject. But I am afraid it will have to come. So, you see, motherly cares fall upon me, and grave questions meet me in the way. You must come up and meet him, Helen, for I hardly know whether to depend on my own judgment or not."

"I surely will. But it seems rather amusing when, only a little while ago, they were such children. And how fond their father was of them! Juliet, you have done your duty nobly by them."

"I have loved them truly. And they would have been so alone in the world when their school days were over. What a fine, generous-hearted woman Mrs. Aldred is! I really fell in love with her during the summer. Once I envied you your facility of seeing the charming side of people, and now I wonder if I shall not increase my list of admirable, loving persons too rapidly."

"I think one cannot have too many fine and true friends. I have found some delightful ones at Westfield."

While they had been talking, a young couple

walked up the aisle and seated themselves at a table on the opposite side, their faces toward the door. The girl was laughing and chatting, and the young man very devoted. Helen watched them furtively, with a curious consciousness of knowing who they were. The girl flushed, and it dawned upon her that they were two of her own scholars. They rose suddenly, with their faces turned away, and went quite to the lower end of the place.

They finished their refreshments and Juliet rose. Helen followed her, wondering if there was any real duty here; but before she could decide, they had reached the street. Their ways lay in different directions now. Helen was early at her station, and she watched the newcomers until her train was called, but did not see the young couple.

Ada Cranston came in on Mondays, from Fairhaven, and boarded through the week with some friends. Now and then she remained over Sunday. She was studying for a teacher and was in her third year. Helen had not taken to her especially, though she was a fair student.

She watched again when she left the train. Mr. Conover spoke to her.

"Were you waiting for some one?" he asked.

"Yes and no. I saw two of my pupils in the city; I thought they might be on the train."

"Will you allow me to walk up with you?"

It was quite dark, though Helen never minded the walk home. Mr. Conover was very gentlemanly and quite a talker. This time his subject was the gratification of the townspeople that they were able to retain Mr. Underwood. They would hardly know how to get along without him. Teachers were something like clergymen, and changing about was not a good thing for them or the pupils.

Ada and Edgar Mills were in their places on Monday morning, but neither had very good recitations. Helen watched them a little, and found they took every opportunity to be together. During the previous winter Mr. Underwood had quite broken up the habit of what he called "spooning," laughing the larger boys out of it.

Some word came from Mr. Hildreth. He

had been quite ill and was now traveling about in the loveliest climate in the world, with his young friend, Mr. Danforth, for companion. He would not be home until in April. And his instructions to Martin were to give the horses plenty of exercise, and take out any of the neighbors who desired to go.

"It's just splendid of him," declared Lilian Firth. "But I am sorry he has been ill. I think we all are."

Georgia Winters and her mother made quite frequent demands on Martin. The girl had several admirers in her train, but no real lover, to her secret mortification, since most of her set were either engaged or married.

Helen had quite dismissed the episode of Ada and Edgar being in the city, though she knew it was a secret, as none of the girls referred to it. Ada had to remain in one afternoon to finish some examples, and was rather cross about it. When she took them to Miss Grant, she had a small paper-covered novel in her hand, which she laid down on a chair in order to correct a mistake in one of the problems, and then went off without it.

The girls had been forbidden to bring novels to school, but Helen knew some of them evaded the rule. She picked up this and was about to put it in her desk, when she ran over the pages and a note dropped out. It was dated that morning, and commenced, "My dear wife." She sat for a few moments, considering. They could not be married, of course. Young Mills was seventeen, Ada a little older. Mr. Mills was in the firm of watch-case manufacturers.

She read part of the first page, which was a silly rhapsody in answer to what Ada had written him. Then she slipped it back into the book and locked her desk. She would attend to it to-morrow.

Ada was quite distraught the next day, but she plucked up courage to ask Miss Grant if she had mislaid a book while she stood there going over her examples. She was to take it to a friend.

"Yes," returned Helen quietly. "I will give it to you after school. You know it is against the rules to bring in such books."

The letter surely was in it, for Ada had

looked through every other book; but she hoped it had escaped Miss Grant's scrutiny.

Helen asked Edgar to wait for her in one of the recitation rooms, and then she led Ada thither. Two very red and alarmed faces confronted one another.

"I believe you are the writer of this letter, Edgar Mills," she said in a low tone. "It accidentally came into my possession, and I suppose it was written to Miss Cranston."

Neither of them spoke. Their eyes seemed glued to the floor.

"You surely are *not* married?"

"Oh, no! Miss Grant," said Edgar.

"But we *are* engaged. And he gave me this ring," said Ada, meeting Miss Grant's eyes for the first time, and drawing a long breath as if to emphasize the statement.

"Edgar, is this so?"

"Well," hesitatingly; "we are both young, but we mean to wait. And we love each other. But we want to keep our secret——"

"It is a foolish, dishonorable secret. Your father is planning for you to go to college

when you are through here. So it would be years before you could marry."

"I shall not go to college," he returned. "I shall beg father to let me learn a trade next year. I shall be eighteen."

The assumption of mannishness was honorable, at least, and the boy had courage.

"Do you mean to keep the secret for the next three or four years?"

In their youthful enthusiasm they had planned a secret marriage; but Miss Grant's face did not invite to confidence.

"Well——" he twisted a button on his coat in a nervous fashion. "When I begin to earn money——"

"Ada, what are your plans? Your mother wishes you to teach."

"Oh, mamma would rather have me married," she said, with a toss of the head. "And—and I don't believe she'll say a word against the engagement. She was married when she was seventeen."

Helen studied them in dismay. What did they know about real love—poor, foolish children!

"Mr. Underwood forbade this practice of writing love letters between boys and girls. I shall have to inform him. And it will also be my duty to lay the matter before your father."

"Oh, Miss Grant, please don't! He wouldn't understand. And it would be so hard for us both."

"It would be cruel, Miss Grant! I'll tell mamma, if you wish me to," and Ada began to cry.

"You were down at New York three weeks ago; I saw you in the Savoy. Is that the only time?"

Both were silent, then glanced furtively at each other.

"I think it was not," said Helen.

"Well—I went down on an errand for father. Oh, he sends me occasionally. And I asked her to come down. We went to the theater."

"You will think this very foolish business when you are twenty. And wrong, too. I shall see your father, Edgar."

"Oh, Miss Grant, please, please don't!

We *are* engaged, and we'll just keep to it in spite of everybody."

Helen saw there would be no reasoning with them. Poor, foolish children, fancying this regard permanent that had in it none of the real truth and holiness of pure love. She decided that Ada had been the most to blame; she looked the most eager now, and there was obstinacy in the lines about the mouth. What kind of a mother must the girl have, to be so lacking in delicacy? She would consent to a private marriage on the stress of the moment.

"Miss Grant," and there was a certain resolve in the boy's face, "I did not know it was against the rules to—to correspond this way, and I'll give it up if you will let the matter stop here. I'll stay in school until it closes, and then I'll tell my father what I mean to do——"

"But I won't give up the engagement. You have no right——" and Ada's face was flushed with anger.

"I'm not going to give it up. I'd wait years for you. But, you see,—we shall have to settle this matter some way. I know my

father will be angry if it comes to his ears. Oh, you need not feel afraid I shall go back on you——” he contended earnestly.

It was ridiculous, and yet it had a pathetic side. At present she could not fancy Ada being a fit wife for any one. Their pleading did not in the least touch Helen, yet she felt really sorry for Edgar.

“I will tell you to-morrow what I think best,” she said quietly, and then she turned. She would leave them just now to their own consideration.

“Will you give me my letter?” asked Ada in a peremptory tone.

“Not at present. You should have been more careful of anything so sacred,” she said with a touch of sarcasm.

“It is mine.” Ada held out her hand.

“You may have it to-morrow. Good-afternoon,” and she was gone.

She did not take the most direct way to the Underwood house, lest she might be watched. And she had just turned one corner when she met the principal.

“Oh,” she exclaimed, “come back home

with me. I have something important to discuss."

"Oh, I was only out for a walk. What has gone wrong now? I can tell by your face."

"A piece of folly—youthful folly that you will have to settle." She looked disgusted.

"If it is nothing worse than folly——"

"I am afraid it may go on to something worse."

He opened the gate and they walked into the sitting-room. Mrs. Underwood was at some needlework.

"I was thinking you would have to be brought with force and arms if I was to see you again. And you are going all round the neighborhood to tea, I hear. Miss Grant, please to recall the fact that I was one of your earliest friends," was the lady's greeting.

"Is it very private?" asked Mr. Underwood, turning to Helen.

"No. I'd rather Mrs. Underwood would hear it," and she could not help smiling over the ridiculousness of the matter.

"If there was a secret, I should be jealous at once," the wife said in an amused tone.

Helen sat down, unfastened her coat, and laid aside her hat. Then she began with her story, and handed the letter to Mr. Underwood.

"What utter imbecility! Yet, like measles, it does break out now and then. And that Mills boy is a nice fellow, too; stood high in his examination. The girl I don't know much about."

"The idea of their going down to the city alone! And her mother not knowing," exclaimed Mrs. Underwood.

"I'm sorry he takes it so seriously. Such children, too! He isn't eighteen yet. Yes, his father must know. They say silly things in their adolescence, but they do not always plan a marriage; and secret marriages are much to be dreaded. They are productive of misery and trouble. Yes, I must see Mr. Mills. I think I had better go to the office. The mother is away, in Florida, for her health. There are some younger children."

"Then I'll keep Miss Grant, and we'll have a high tea instead of going out to dinner."

"And I shall hear the result the sooner," laughed Helen.

Mr. Underwood donned his coat and hat. Mrs. Underwood began some preparations for tea, keeping up a running comment as she went out and in. Helen had been the confident of more than one lovelorn girl at college, and had found that they recovered presently. Even Lilian Firth had been thankful for her lover's desertion of her.

"One almost doubts the wisdom of co-education," said Mrs. Underwood. "Yet, in my time, boys and girls could be good friends. But we didn't have such trashy novels to read. And there were home duties to occupy one's mind. Mothers looked after their daughters a little more closely. What do you suppose Mrs. Cranston is like?"

"I do not recall her. Ada boards with the Farwells through the week, and lately I notice she has stayed over Sunday. I have not taken any special fancy to her, though she is a fair scholar."

“Will she make a good teacher?”

“I do not think she will. She is not ambitious.”

They waited quite a while for Mr. Underwood's return.

“Let us have our talk over the table,” said his wife. “Miss Grant must be famished. Of course you saw Mr. Mills?”

“Yes, and he was very thankful for my coming at once, and wished to be remembered most cordially to Miss Grant. But we shall lose a good scholar, for which I am sorry. He will be sent elsewhere at once. Mr. Mills had a mind, at first, to try a regular boys' school, but he hated to have him away from home.”

“And he was not angry—indignant?”

“Oh, no. And very gentlemanly. The two younger boys are in this school, and he is very much pleased with their progress.”

“Come and sit down,” said Mrs. Underwood, “lest the viands catch cold.”

CHAPTER XIII

TRYING TO ADJUST EXPERIENCE

HELEN returned in a very satisfactory mood, after spending a pleasant evening. She wondered a little what would be the consequences the next morning. Edgar Mills was not present; Miss Cranston was sullen, and showed traces of an unhappy night. Helen slipped the note on her desk, without any explanation, and went serenely about her duties.

Just after noon a note came through the post-office for her, and one for Miss Cranston. Mr. Mills wrote to thank her again for her promptness in dealing with the matter. On Saturday he expected to enter Edgar in a regular boys' school, and he would not be back at Westfield in the intervening days. It was a very childish, silly affair that he had taken steps to end, he hoped, though he had found Edgar very resolute in his own way.

But boys soon forgot, or were ashamed of such youthful folly. He was very glad Edgar's school record had been so commendable, and he was truly sorry to send him away, since the school stood so deservedly high.

It was evident that Ada's note was not a pleasant one. She was indifferent in her class work.

"Miss Grant," she said at mid-afternoon, "I would like to go home. My head aches so that I can hardly see, and I feel as if I were going to be ill. I do not think I shall be back before Monday."

"Perhaps that will be best," Helen said kindly. "I hope you will be fresh and well by that time." She longed to say something more sympathetic, but she was afraid of a rebuff.

"So it is well settled," she said to Mr. Underwood. "And I do admire Mr. Mills."

"He begs we will make no further talk about the matter. Now if Miss Cranston has sense enough not to blurt it out——"

But it was not quite ended. Saturday afternoon Helen had a call from a stranger; a rather

pretty woman somewhere in the thirties, fashionably attired, and with a pompadour that was large enough for a crown.

"I am Mrs. Cranston," she began. "I wish to know something about this unfortunate affair, and *why* my daughter's engagement should have been broken off with no satisfactory explanation. And it seems to me you should have given her lover's note back to my daughter and not made so much trouble. She is ill in bed."

"I am sincerely sorry she should have taken it so to heart. I did only what the regulations of the school required. I turned a clandestine note over to the principal, and he acted in the matter. The young man is barely eighteen and his father had plans for his life that precluded marriage for years yet. They were both too young to enter into any such agreement."

"I was just seventeen when I was married, and my husband was twenty. We were poor and have had a hard struggle, but we have been as happy as most folks. And this Mr. Mills is rich, I hear, so he could afford to

give his son a taste of happiness. I think an early marriage better for a young man."

Her tone was very irritating and resentful.

"My daughter is very much in love. So was he. She showed me some of the letters, and they were full of devotion. There is nothing so sweet, and pure, and holy as the first bloom of the young heart. And to have it ruthlessly destroyed is a crime, a murder of the innocents, a cruel, dastardly act. And he was so much in earnest that he offered to go to work and care for her; but no father with plenty of money would have allowed that."

"His father proposed to give him a first-class education. If their affection should outlast these years of waiting I do not think Mr. Mills would disbelieve it a case of true love."

"But you see he has sent him away, and they are not even to correspond. I do hope they can find some way to circumvent this cruel edict. Oh, I don't wonder young people run away sometimes and get married."

Helen was a little shocked and a good deal

disgusted with the lack of moral sense and motherly anxiety for a daughter's welfare.

"You see, there are five children; two girls right behind Ada. I think Providence ought to have boys the oldest; you can set them at work sooner. We're making some sacrifice in sending Ada to the high school, for teaching seems more genteel than sewing or going into any kind of a factory. Ethel, my second girl, is a born dressmaker, but Ada's no good at it. So I said—'You must either teach school or get married.' And there's so few young men about our place, except the farm workers. Oh, dear! The mothers of girls have anxious times until they get them settled. And this Mr. Mills—do you think anything can be done toward getting a hearing with him?"

"Mr. Mills seems to have settled it until his son is twenty-one," Helen said stiffly.

"Ada said you weren't a bit sympathetic. I don't suppose school teachers ever are. They get kind of queer and hardened, and seldom marry. I did hope——"

"I can do nothing in the matter," decisively.

“But you need not have given up the note.”

Helen made no reply. She was tired of the interview with such a frivolous, inconsequent woman.

“Well,” when the silence was growing awkward, “I may as well go back to my poor girl, and take her only cold comfort.”

She rose, with what she considered a great deal of dignity, and walked out to the hall with a very icy farewell.

Helen buried her face in her hands and laughed convulsively. The idea of any mother humiliating herself in that fashion! And when there was such a small prospect of success.

Ada stayed out of school a week, and by that time was tired of home and began to wonder whether three or four years of waiting would be endurable. She had had a vague idea that there might be a secret marriage, and that when it was irrevocable Mr. Mills would put his son into some position in the factory, and all would be happiness.

Some of the boys wondered at Mills' sudden defection. He had been counting so much

on the spring games and the rowing. There were no explanations made, and though Ada was sorely tempted to confess herself the victim of a cruel father, she did not want to be teased or ridiculed. She had one letter from Edgar, though his conscience pricked him for being disloyal to his father. But he said bravely, there was nothing before them but years of waiting, until he was twenty-one and his own master. Through all, they would be true to each other.

That Mr. Hildreth was on his way home was good news. They would cross Texas and come over to New Orleans, and visit some of the Southern cities. He was quite well again and longing to be at home.

And now Helen looked steadily at her own future. Somewhere it had gone awry. Or else there were so many sides, so many paths opening, that she stood indrawn, as it were, not knowing which one to take. The woman who loved would marry and rest in her husband's heart; accept his life, not have any separate life of her own. But *she* had a sep-

arate life. There was a broad place she could fill. And she thought of the home Leslie had gone to, with her fine instincts, her love of all things beautiful, of friends and interchange of thoughts, of order and neatness and refinement. Did she ever long for the life she had left behind?

But *her* life could be different. She could go out into the great world where harvests were ready for the gathering. She could take a rich share. She could do some fine work in teaching, speaking, in writing—not a novel, that would never be her gift—but something the world had need of as much, the training and developing of souls, the true life that somehow had fallen into desuetude in the rush and hurry of to-day.

Mrs. Yarrow had given her career up for love; for home, husband, and children.

It was not that Helen cared so much for fame; it was the power of reaching souls, of inspiring them with what was best and noblest.

And there was Miss Morse. Her work might not be noised abroad in the great world, but how many sweet and noble women there

were who had her to thank for setting their feet in the right way!

Had she been caught by a sudden flaring light and carried captive? Surely that was not all of love! She had seen it grow cold in others—yet not always. There was Shirley, who had been carried away with girlish romance, but yet would have held herself in the background rather than defraud her dear friend, Helen, of what might justly be hers.

Oh, why should all these doubts rise up to perplex her?

“I am going to run away on Friday,” she said to Mr. Underwood. “My friend at Kingsland has sent me an urgent invitation—there are some grave or, rather, serious matters on hand. And I shall not return until Monday morning. But I will try to be on the mark.”

“Oh, I will not report you if you are half an hour behind,” he laughed. “I think some times you are too exigent. Oh, do you know the *Portsmouth* is expected in from Charleston on Sunday? Mr. Hildreth will be aboard,

and that young friend of his. I shall go down. Shall I take a message from you?"

She flushed warmly. "Nothing but pure gladness. That comprehends a great deal."

Sunday! They would hardly come out to Westfield before Monday.

Martin had been over to Mrs. Stirling with the news.

"Seems to me this has been the longest and dreariest time Mr. Hildreth has ever been away. Maybe because we heard he wasn't very well and was worried," said Martin. "Thank the Lord, nothing has gone wrong with us, and the horses are in fine trim. Mrs. Ruden is making the house spic-and-span. And there'll be a big house-warming or I miss my guess."

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Lilian. "I just hate to have you go away. I seem to have but such a little of you now."

The days had grown somewhat longer, but it was evening when she reached her destination. Miss Craven was there to meet her.

"Juliet," she cried, "you are really getting stout and matronly."

"Yes, it began in England. Perhaps it was drinking tea. But you look rather tired."

"There was so much to do to-day. And then I hurried off. But I am very well."

"We shall all be so glad to have you. When our matter was decided Wilma said at once, 'Now we must send for cousin Helen.'"

"And you are—satisfied?"

"Well—I should like to have kept her a year or two longer, and for both of the girls to go near together! They have never been apart since their step-mother sent them to school."

"And how does Elma take it?"

"She has been wonderfully interested. And the prospective brother-in-law has been very generous to her, counting her in for most everything. But of course they cannot live together."

"And Wilma?" suggestively.

"You see, the mother owns the house. They have always been together, even when he was studying abroad. So it would be cruel to part them. And she is quite as much in love with Wilma as the son is. She has always wanted

a daughter. I am only afraid she will spoil her."

"That is really delightful."

"Yes. But I have become so fond of girls that I am looking around for some others, partly grown. They are such an interest. And it will be so long before baby Theo will be a big girl."

"But don't you ever mean to marry, Juliet?"

"Are there not women who fulfill their destiny in a single life? I have everything I want, and unbounded liberty to take up any fad that I fancy," laughing. "I *do* like being my own mistress. And single women are coming to the fore. You meet some splendid ones in the city. When you find recreant husbands and unhappy wives you are thankful the husband does not belong to you."

"And you know we were to live together, like the maids of Llangollen, in our old age."

"And you could not keep the faith. You have spoiled it all. Seems to me Gordon Danforth is a great wanderer."

"I think Mr. Hildreth has about adopted him."

The house lights shone over the lawn, making edges of gold on the evergreens. The girls rushed out on the porch to welcome cousin Helen. Mrs. Howard stood inside the door with Theo by the hand, who said, "Welcome, cousin Helen," and the tall girl stooped to kiss the golden-haired midget.

The fire was blazing brightly. It was spring by the calendar, but winter was still hovering out of doors, as if loath to let go. Oh, it was delightfully homey!

"Let the maid take your wraps. Dinner is ready, and you must be famished."

What a lovely picture of comfort and refined elegance it was. For a moment Helen was almost envious.

They were merry enough round the table, recounting some of the later happenings; and now and then a bit would flash out of their journey abroad. There had been letters from the Foxcroft girls. One of them was to be married in the spring.

"And it is to that Mr. Romer we met. He

used to be there a good deal, but I never thought of him as a lover for Edith. He was a sort of superintendent in the factory, and has been taken in as a partner. She writes as if she is extremely happy."

"Well, aren't you?" And Elma's eyes flashed with a teasing light. "I suppose it is the same all the world over when a man loves you."

Wilma turned rosy red.

"Or you love him," appended Helen.

She thought of Ada Cranston's wild folly. Was it not a libel on love to call it that? Wilma was so sincere, so honest. She brought his photograph to show Helen. An attractive, rather artistic face, with a subtle air of refinement.

He called in the next morning on his way to the city. Helen fancied that something about him suggested Mr. Gartney, and spoke of it to Juliet.

"I thought so too, at first. The intangible resemblance puzzled me when I first knew him. If he makes as lovely a husband—well, we know nothing of the children's mother, but

I do think the second marriage was a great mistake. Still, if it had not been we should not have known the children in all probability. How oddly other people's lives—and deaths also—cross ours, and how we are mixed up in this queer world."

Helen flushed, thinking how many events had grown out of the old school days at Mrs. Aldred's.

"I wonder what became of the second wife," Juliet continued retrospectively. "We should have made inquiries about her. I do not think she has won any considerable fame or we should have heard. Yet her verses were beautiful, and certainly unlike her real self. Somehow—I have been rather distrustful of this kind of genius since. And of the women who seem so earnest and eager in taking up the world's work, but who never bear the real brunt of the labor. There is a great deal of pretense in the world."

"And I have known some lovely, honest, high-minded people. Oh, Juliet, you ought not lose faith."

"I am not losing it, my dear. I have a

great deal more than I began with. But I have gained a clearer insight as well. I listen affably to these glowing, high-wrought sentiments, and find that the speaker's real work does not correspond. I have a passion for pure honesty. Oh, I wish there was more of it in the world."

"It is a difficult thing, to be purely honest in every matter. You may come to see things in a different light."

"Then we should be honest enough to admit it."

Helen wondered. She, too, had despised shams and deceptions. Yet had she not been living a two-sided life, not quite sure which would be the most satisfying in the years to come? If she had made a mistake! Oh, would not love know?

It was a mild spring day, and they went for a drive just after luncheon. The trees were budding, the crocuses in the grass had begun to show color. There was the fragrance of the new growth of pine and spruce and hemlock that the peculiar moisture of the warming-up earth brought out. The sun

spread great golden patches about, with little shade to break them.

Helen was surprised at several beautiful new homes that had sprung up in the night, it seemed to her. Oh, it was quite different from Westfield; and she smiled to herself. Yet there were beautiful places just out of the busy old town.

Hallin Royse was to come to dinner, but they were home a good hour before that time. Wilma took possession of Helen. How glad and joyous she was; as if her whole soul had been set anew to delightful music.

"I want you to like him," she began in her soft, half-pleading tone. "I think most people admire him, and I am glad of that. Then he is a fine musician. He and Aunt Jue play together so splendidly on the organ and the piano. That was what called him here at first. And he thinks Aunt Jue has a remarkable gift of improvising, and wonders that she hasn't done something with it. He has written out several things and sent them to a New York publisher, who pronounced

them fine. And he gave me some lessons. I wasn't dreaming that he cared for me. I felt just free and sort of at home with him. And his mother is such a lovely woman. She likes to have both of us girls come over often. The house is much smaller than ours, but it is just an exquisite nest. And when he spoke—oh! it was so wonderful, I couldn't believe it all. I think that at first Aunt Jue didn't quite like it. Not that she had anything against him, only it seemed to make a break in the home. And we had planned to go to Holland and Germany next summer and—oh! enough journeys and pleasures to last until we were quite old women. Oh, cousin Helen, do you think it very selfish for me to take a joy that will be all my own? For though you may keep all the old loves, you can never give away any part of this; and the curious thing is, you don't want to."

Wilma laughed with a soft delight, her eyes limpid with joy.

"No, you couldn't," commented Helen.

"And some day Elma will have a lover. I hope he will live nearby, so Aunt Juliet won't

miss us too much. I shall go to Mrs. Royse's—she is counting so much on it. She has always longed for a daughter. It will be like having a real mother; not that selfish step-mother that crowded us out of our home and papa's heart—or at least tried to. And Aunt Juliet has been like a real relation. You know father gave us to her. And she has been so good to us. I never knew all, until—well, until I was engaged. Then she said father had left some money, enough to educate us—it was our own dear mamma's, with a little he had added to it. But she wouldn't use it, and has given us this delightful home and our education, and the money has been turned over and over, and Uncle Howard has put it into something that pays well. Hallin insists that it is to be settled on me; so you see, I am an heiress in a small way," and the girl laughed joyously.

"Oh! I just wish papa could come back to see me married."

Helen smiled at the desire. How much happiness Juliet had given these two girls, and what blessedness it had been to her.

Then Mr. Royse came and they went down to greet him. Helen thought him a young girl's ideal lover. And, though he made no secret of his devotion, he was not foolishly effusive.

They spent a delightful evening, and on Sunday they all went to Mrs. Royse's to dinner, except Mrs. Howard and Theo, who seemed to have added a dozen new charms to her old ones.

"I watch out for faults," said Juliet, "but she is so tractable and merry, so easily pleased with everything, so loving. I *should* like to know what her parents were like, or whether it is simply a case of environment. But we often hear good news from the children adopted out. Love and home work wonders. Yes, we let hundreds of them grow up to become criminals because men and women have not faith enough to save them."

Helen found Mrs. Royse a really charming person. The silvery threads in the light, wavy hair gave it a glistening look. Her gray and white silk, with its fine laces and one diamond at her throat, was simple and ladylike. In her

manner, friendliness showed as well as good breeding.

"I hope you are going to be pleased with Wilma's choice," she said in a delicate fashion. "She has told me about her school days, when you and Miss Craven were so good to the poor orphaned children. I think my son could not have suited himself better, and you know he has been about a good deal, and I could not ask for a dearer daughter."

Helen was deeply touched by the mother's sincere approval, and the meeting was a real pleasure to her. Mr. Royse was a charming host. Yes, the girl would be very happy and give freely of her own sweet nature.

They talked of journeys abroad, of music and wonderful singers, of the churches he had seen outside of England, and of some of the famous oratorios. Then he had to go for the evening service, and he escorted the two girls.

"It is like a leaf out of a fairy book," said Helen. "It puts one in love with love itself. I'm not sure but it is best to fall in love in

your early youth when hopes and dreams have a superlative radiance," and she gave a soft laugh.

"Is it all right with you, Helen? You say so little—and Mr. Danforth has been away so long——"

Helen made an effort to steady her voice.

"Oh, you know I have never been a romantic girl. There have been so many things beside love to my life. When I might have indulged in rhapsody, I was planning to get to college; and study—teaching has interested me so much. And there have been so many friends. I wonder if I have divided myself up too much? But the odd thing is that I keep all the old ones as well as those that are newer. Why, Mrs. Wilmarth begs me to come down to Hope and give them a talk. Oh, do you remember that old time? I shall begin to think soon that I have lived many lives."

What sent that old verse of Evelyn Hope spinning through her brain?

"Lived so much since then—
Given up myself so many times;—"

Had she really given up herself? And was she not evading the main question? Oh, let her have a semblance of honesty, at least.

"You see, after all, we have not had much of each other. I have not seen him since that brief welcome home from abroad. Of course there have been letters. I wonder if either of us have changed in this time. Oh, life does keep you so busy! I ought to live to be old, to have a little leisure."

Then the friends parted, and she was on her way home in the bright April morning. There was a half-resentful feeling stirring within her. Gordon's letters had been full of the daily happenings, of the desire of earnest living, of the work on every hand; but they had ceased to be the ardent love letters with which their engagement had begun. Was it because she had withheld so much of herself? Had he changed? Well, if he put work in the foreground, so had she; if he had ambitions, so had she. What if both might reach a higher standing, apart!

After all, was success so much to a woman? Perhaps Miss Marian Trevor was satisfied

with it. She wondered why the fine presence, the trained voice, the kindling eye, the half-sarcasms, and the scorn of what was esteemed womanly weakness should haunt her so persistently! She did not want that kind of fame, she could not teach that sort of selfishness.

She made her change of trains, watched the little towns as they sped by. No one interrupted her with a welcome. She was a little late, and hurried along to the school.

CHAPTER XIV

GATHERING UP LOOSE ENDS

THE children were in line, marching into school. Miss Jaynes gave her a nod of pleasure. Mr. Underwood crossed the hall with news in his face.

“They came in at four yesterday. Mr. Hildreth says he is well, but he looks poorly. And you would hardly know that young Danforth.”

She went up to her floor. There were joyous greetings. “We were afraid you weren’t coming,” said half a dozen voices. They gathered for the opening exercises. How manly some of the big boys looked as they bowed politely. Every morning she and Dick Eastman exchanged a look that said so much. This morning it was gladness—that he was well and in good spirits, and prepared for perfect recitations.

The morning passed quickly. Nothing occurred to bother. Only it seemed as if she could never get away from the children. She went home to lunch in fair weather. Halfway up the hill, Ruth Millard had hold of her frock, and Allen walked beside her until they had to turn off.

Some one came from the Hildreth house and intercepted her. Yes, he had changed curiously. The boyish uplift was gone and in its place was a firm manliness, a power in every line. And he had grown much stouter.

He bent over and kissed her with a sort of grave sweetness.

"It has been such a long, long while," he said. "There is a good deal of unwritten story between. Will you come to us this afternoon? Mr. Hildreth is wild to see you. He was rather upset with the journey, but will be himself in a few days."

"Yes," hardly noting what reply she made.

"You look splendid, Helen."

"And you are—why, I am almost afraid of you!"

Her glance wavered and fell, her cheeks

burned like flame. She laughed, with a touch of embarrassment, as they paused at the walk.

"Your time is precious, I know. I couldn't meet you before all that raft of children, so if I do not come down this afternoon——"

"I would rather you did not. This afternoon, then——" and a strange light wavered in her eyes.

He bowed and left her. There was a new power in his personality, and it had a curious influence over her.

"They came home yesterday," Mrs. Stirling began, "and there were callers until Mr. Hildreth had to excuse himself. He must have been pretty ill to have weakened so much. And oh, how glad he was to be at home! Did you go in?"

"It would have been an aggravation," returned Helen, "or I must have gone without my luncheon. And I had breakfast early this morning so as to catch my train."

She was not so very hungry after all, and was glad that Mrs. Stirling kept up the talk. Then she hurried off again.

How queer and strange the meeting had been; like old friends, not lovers. They might have parted yesterday. There were some new impressions that she half resented—as if they could not belong to this time; yet they surely had not been in the past.

If the morning had gone smoothly, the afternoon did not. Lester Field was almost equal to the old time Dick Eastman, though without the maliciousness. He could mispronounce a word so that half the class would be in a giggle, or give a queer answer, with the most innocent face. Sometimes he fairly bubbled over with fun. And Archie Varick *was* obstinate about a Latin line; and two or three of the girls evidently had some secret on hand, and were holding up books, pretending to study, while they talked in what was vulgarly called “Hog Latin.” Examples went wrong—and she felt very tired and a good deal annoyed.

Mr. Underwood kept her talking. “I am really alarmed about Mr. Hildreth,” he said. “I don’t know what we should do without him. But he did get so awfully tired last night

that I just pulled Laura away by main strength. I suppose you had a good time."

"I always do at Kingsland. And one of my friend's young girls has a lover; an admirable young man, who isn't poverty poor, and bids fair to make quite a name in the future. They will be married in the summer."

"Mr. Mills was in to see me on Saturday evening, and asked about that girl. Edgar begins to feel quite at home in his new school, but he would much rather be at Westfield. They have a crack ball club, which seems to comfort him, though he is not in it. I do wish it had not happened. She should have known better."

"Her mother is another of the silly women. And I don't see what outlook there is for Ada as a teacher. She hasn't one requisite."

"Oh, two years may develop her."

"Or she may marry," laughed Helen sarcastically. "Girls who set resolutely about the matter generally do."

"Which doesn't allow much for the wisdom of men in general. I only hope she won't set her heart on another schoolboy."

“ I join you there most sincerely. We don’t want to lose any more of our boys.”

Then Helen hurried home and changed her dress. She dreaded, yet desired the interview.

“ I don’t suppose I shall be home to dinner,” she announced.

“ Oh, no. They will have so much to tell you. To think of going over to Alaska, and then down—Goodness only knows where—and all over the United States. I don’t wonder he was worn out.”

Mr. Hildreth was watching at the window, and opened the door himself. He clasped his arms about Helen and, much moved, exclaimed, “ My dear, dear child!” leading her into the library, where there was a cheerful grate fire.

“ I am so glad to be at home again! I doubt if I ever undertake another as long journey; but part of it was compulsory. I don’t know what I should have done without Gordon—things at Rockfort were in such a condition. And then the tragic ending! But we won’t talk about that. Have you been well? And how are school matters? I missed my talk—

unless I should get well enough to have it later on," with a faint smile.

"They have all been delightful. Mr. Field, the father of eight children, gave one, and it was splendid; about Mark Twain. And Mr. Eastman was excellent. The principal of Ridgewood high school came over—think of that!—and instructed us in civics."

"Why, there couldn't have been any lack of interest. Mr. and Mrs. Underwood were up last evening. Certainly, I had a warm welcome."

He leaned back in the chair. Yes, he had changed a good deal. The old-time vigor had given place to languor; and he was much thinner. It went to Helen's heart.

He reached over and took her hand. It was so warm, so full of life.

"I remember when I first saw you—at your college, at Professor Yarrow's. I think I didn't make any mistake, though Underwood was quite dubious. When have you heard from your friends?"

"I spent part of my Christmas vacation with them. And they are both joyous over a new

little son. Angela is really an admirable child. The mother is one of the happiest of women; as you once said, 'the best balanced.' "

"She takes her time and looks well into matters before she decides. She is such a good trainer of girls and women that one regrets to have her out of the ranks where such as she are needed."

"She is still at it," returned Helen, smiling. "I don't think she can ever quite relinquish it. I wish she was as rich as my friend, Miss Craven. She would have such wide influence on society."

They lapsed into silence. Not a year ago Mr. Hildreth had joined her hand to Gordon's and pronounced over them a solemn benediction. Her whole soul had assented. What had happened since? Had she been hasty, swayed by some irresistible power? Was it truly love? Whatever had happened, she must keep the faith—at any sacrifice. What was the sacrifice? Was it the possibility of rising from station to station, making for herself a name among intellectual people—grasping the great truths that were stirring the world,

working for them, perhaps fighting for them? Winning some approval, perhaps; probably some unfriendly criticism. And then——

“Won’t you have a light?” asked Mrs. Ruden from the doorway. “Dinner is ready, and Mr. Danforth has brought a pile of mail up from the office.”

They both rose. Mr. Hildreth put his hand on her shoulder.

“Helen,” he said solemnly, “I want you to be very good to my boy, Gordon, now and always.”

Gordon’s greeting was bright and cordial, and they took their places at the table.

“I feel as if I had been away a year,” began Mr. Hildreth. “Indeed, many a year has not seemed as long. And I had begun to think that Westfield could not get along without me. Now they talk of making us over into a city! We could have applied two years ago; but cities are expensive luxuries. Still, there are so many new people and so much new business—and there are some advantages.”

“Oh, they wouldn’t do anything without you,” Helen returned quickly. “This and that

project was put aside until your return. Mr. Henderson is one of your staunchest admirers, and Mr. Underwood thinks, 'The King can do no wrong.' "

She ended with a gay, light laugh.

"I am afraid the 'King' must abdicate. Why, you know I am getting quite on the elderly list. And when a man succumbs to that insidious enemy, illness, he has to pause and remember that he is no longer impervious to the arrows and slings of time; and it behooves him, then, to look forward and plan for a serene and happy old age."

And he had planned to have her in it. She knew that.

He was as much interested in the school as ever, and he wanted to hear how the young men were developing; what hopes they had for a grand Commencement this year; and if the new scholars had been satisfactory to her. He was delighted that Mr. Underwood had declined the advancement offered to him.

"You will think my eagerness for gossip a sure sign of the oncoming of age," he said gayly to Helen as they rose.

There was a little more talk over the fire, then Mr. Hildreth begged them to excuse him. He was rather weary and would retire. And, no doubt, they had arrears of talk to make up, giving them both a tender smile.

They wished him a cordial good-night.

A curious silence fell upon them. Gordon was standing at the side of the grate, leaning his elbow on the mantel. He had always been a manly young fellow, now he was "the full measure of a man," with strength in every line of the well developed figure, and a high purpose in every line of his face. And though curiously changed, he had not lost that potent individuality which had attracted her attention when she first saw him standing on the lawn at Mrs. Aldred's. What odd fate had crossed their paths here and there?

He came over and seated himself in the chair beside her, taking possession of her hand in a manner that stirred every pulse of her being—yet she was conscious of a secret revolt.

"We have known so little of each other since last September! It was partly my fault. Something so unexpected happened to me—so

overwhelming—that, at first, I hardly knew how to take it and accept the changes that it might bring.”

Had she been supplanted? She had thought so much of what her own life might be to her, but she had not wholly decided to give up her engagement. And no woman even a little in love could endure the first thought of another being preferred to her.

He felt the soft fingers he held stiffen a little. Was she bracing herself?

“It was before I came to bid you ‘welcome home’—a week or so. A sudden something happened to my right eye. It was like a black blot, some ways that I turned it. There was no pain of any kind, but I went to an oculist at once. Of course we hear of people stricken with blindness in a few hours, or losing sight gradually——”

“Oh, Gordon!” It was a pathetic cry.

“He said it was a slight paralysis of a little bit of the optic nerve; it might grow worse, and it might never increase until old age. He was a young man, but very ambitious and a great student. We had been quite friends.

He gave me some kindly advice; not to get nervous over it, but, for the present, to give up reading or writing; to live a good deal out of doors, and wait patiently until time could decide the case. Oh, you can't think! I was almost crazy over it! For I had never dreamed of such a thing as blindness! My eyes had always been so strong—I could study and read all night without even a headache."

"Oh, Gordon!" she said again, and hid her face on his shoulder. She felt stunned.

"Dear, it may not be so bad after all. I went to a distinguished specialist in New York, who made it out a very serious case; prescribed treatment, with a possible operation and a dark room for several weeks. It almost crushed me. Then I remembered an eminent surgeon who had really saved the sight of one of my college mates. He agreed with my Niagara doctor, gave me the same good advice of not worrying, and charged me, in any new emergency, to come to him at once, and never to consent to any operation until I had consulted him."

"And you bore this all alone!" Her voice

was freighted with infinite pity—self-condemnation as well.

“What was there to say? I thought I could endure the waiting better alone,” and the bravery of his tone touched her. “I don’t know whether it was an obstinate hope that upheld me, but I went back quite comforted. There, awaiting me, was a letter announcing my friend’s return; another, from a young fellow, graduated in civil engineering, who had heard of an outlook in Canada and begged me to go with him for a fortnight or so. I had meant to return to Yale and finish my reading for the next degree. I knew I could do enough clerical work to support me meantime. But this seemed a Godsend. I could not summon the courage to see you,” and his voice had a little falter in it. “I was not ready to confess the painful secret. I resolved to wait a little—and this came in so opportunely. So I accompanied him to Ottawa; and the companionship of a fine, vigorous fellow helped to restore my courage.”

She remembered that she had felt annoyed at what seemed like indifference; that she had

expected more attention; that she had wondered if women were of less account to men than they believed. She could not trust her voice for the comment that trembled on her lips.

“Yes; I went at once, and we set out on our journey. It was a wild, lonely place, where a spur of road had been started some two years before, to open up the country and shorten the distance between two important points. There was also a small bridge to build over a river. And when we reached the place, we found all in the wildest confusion. The paymaster and the superintendent had decamped, the laborers were almost starving, the work just where delay might bring ruin. Word had been sent to the company, and two of the commissioners appeared the next day with money and food; and, after a good deal of talk, order was in some degree restored. They were most glad to have my friend and would have engaged me until the end, I had recalled so much of my old knowledge. I declare to you, Helen, I almost forgot about my eye. And those poor fellows, so far from

home comforts and civilization—my heart ached for them!”

“And you longed to turn missionary?” she said, with a quick breath. It was one of the first things that had made her doubt the wisdom of her choice.

“Oh, one could not help it, who had the cause of humanity at heart. I thought of the brave men who went out to convert the Indians—that Parkman wrote about—to save souls; and I wondered if any were so heroic now. I *did* get deeply interested. The company was—shall I say, most grateful? You see, it was of importance to get as much as was possible done before winter. And then Mr. Hildreth wrote to know if I would not go out to Alaska with him, as there was some business there demanding his immediate attention, and he did not want to undertake the long, hard journey alone. I wonder if I am adventurous? I was no longer needed in Canada, though, as I said, the company would have gladly kept me. It was a wonderful journey. I shall always be glad I took it. Some day we will talk it over.

“As I understand the matter, these two

friends of Mr. Hildreth's had developed a wonderful tract of land rich in coal and iron and some other valuable minerals. They were men of high probity and capacity, and—though I don't believe he cared so much for the possible fortune—he was glad to help his friends, in whom he had the utmost trust. And now they were in difficulty and perhaps on the verge of ruin.

“Some years before this he had saved a young fellow from a prison term for forgery, who had been in great want and temptation. Then he found a place for him to begin over again. He was most grateful, it seemed, and after three honest years he sent him out to these friends. With a fortune in his very grasp he turned recreant again. He began to gamble; to drink, of course; to plunge the firm into difficulties before it was really mistrusted; and he abstracted two important deeds, which they were afraid he had turned over to a syndicate who were most anxious to get possession of the whole tract. And now the question was whether it was best to fight, or give up, and make the best terms they could. The

syndicate was bringing suit. If they could not produce the deeds it would go hard with them. Detectives were on the trail of this Merwin, who had been seen in different places. But at last he was found, gambling in a saloon and accused of cheating. There was a terrific time and some shooting; and Merwin had fallen, after he had shot two of his opponents. The detectives went at once, and insisted that the body should be exhumed. His watch and his large roll of money had been taken by the officials, and he had been buried with scant ceremony. The detectives instituted a new and thorough search, and, in the lining of a garment, found some papers and the two deeds, which proved the case to the satisfaction of the court and decided the true ownership of the tract. It was almost like beginning their fortunes over again. Mr. Hildreth felt the more deeply impelled to stand by them, because he had in a way answered for young Merwin. But the struggle had worn upon him and he had undergone some exposure. We went to Portland and there he collapsed; was for several days seriously ill, and was ordered farther

south at the very earliest date. I was nurse and friend and secretary. I was glad to do all I could for him, and I learned how truly and nobly generous he had been to more than one poor soul; how he had helped in education, and in placing many a person where he could take care of himself. While we were at San Francisco I confessed to him my haunting fear, though I had in a great degree overcome it. We saw some of the best oculists. It was the same verdict—uncertainty.”

“Oh, how brave you were to bear it so cheerfully!”

The words seemed wrested from her.

“My dear, it seemed one of the things permitted. Something went wrong, of course. I had not been using my eyes imprudently at that period. There was nothing but acceptance of what God might send as the issue. I had most of my education; I had trained myself as an extempore speaker; I could still do God's work; that was nearest my heart.”

All this while she had been thinking of her own advancement; of what *she* could do and win, independent of any one. Her heart sud-

denly smote her. A touch of shame, of passionate regret surged through her.

“So you understand what changed my letters a little. You had once teased me about their exuberance. The trouble and illness did interfere somewhat; but I had no right to deepen any impression until you knew the truth.”

“Oh! did you think, *could* you think——” and her voice broke, with a touch of remorseful pain.

“Let us look at it dispassionately,” and his tone was at once tender and strong. “I may never do quite what I aimed at. I had a good deal of pride and ambition. You don’t know what I have learned in these months with Mr. Hildreth. To bear manfully whatever God sends; to do His work in a limited way if He so appoints. But to shadow another life——”

“Oh! you don’t mean—you can’t think for a moment, that——” and Helen’s eyes overflowed.

“Hush, dear, it is a subject for consideration. Do you remember—‘What is required

of thee—to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before thy God.' I want 'to do justly.' I could not take your life that may have so many worthy things in it—ambitions that you could realize, rich experiences that it would be hard to miss—and let this shadow hang over it. It would be cowardly on my part. And now I must 'walk humbly,' not knowing, like the great apostle, what may befall me. Life has hardly begun yet. We are both young. And if the worst should happen, there is still much work that I could do in the great cause. I shall give up nothing that is right or a duty."

She was hardly listening to what he said; yet, in that sort of double personality, she heard it and was going over her life since she had accepted his love with joyous consent. Since then, she had been studying her own satisfactions, worldly aims through which she could attain to heights on which other women had stood; marriage at the last, when it would no longer fetter.

All this time there had been the duty to shape her thoughts, her plans, her life to the

divine fellowship of love. She could, in a measure, accept freedom. But a sudden remorseful tenderness overwhelmed her. Was not life-giving higher and nobler than self-seeking? Would not love be a holier guide and shelter?

“Oh! if you think I should be afraid to go out and meet bravely any shadow of God’s sending, you are wrong. Perhaps I have wandered a little, in the multiplicity of duties and pleasures. I can’t help going whole-heartedly into whatever interests me, and it may not always be the right thing. But I couldn’t have played the rôle of a lovelorn girl when I knew you were at what you considered duties. Perhaps I shall not make a good clergyman’s wife. It *would* go hard with me to be content in Leslie Morse’s sphere. And when you were in Canada, and so interested in those poor, ignorant workmen and their dreary lives, I *did* ask myself if I could share that. Let me be honest. I *did* shrink from the work. I said, then, you were a born missionary. I might do some good work elsewhere——”

“But I should never ask a woman to go

out to such a wilderness; to suffer cold, hunger oftentimes, dreariness; to be far away from friends and the amenities of life. It is a man's work if he is brave enough to devote his life or some years to it. A brave man came there, a man of middle life, who had lost wife and children, so I left them in good hands. The company was not all for self when they learned how things had gone. They found the paymaster afterward, and I suppose he is doing prison work somewhere. The swindling had been going on some little time. I can't understand how a few weeks or months of wild license and extravagance can be an offset to disgrace and imprisonment for years. Sooner or later justice overtakes these men, or else they must be perpetually in hiding. And there was the tragedy at Unalik. Oh, the homes of the world need to give their children more thorough training in honesty and integrity before they send them out to fight the battles of life! And I think, Helen, you have had some of the very best training for a clergyman's wife. You can never guess how we have talked you over in the long hours of

recovery from illness. It would be a sad thing, for love's sake, to give you up; but for duty——”

“The duty was accepted last summer. Do you think I am going back now when you need me—or ought to?”

There was a break in her voice, and he knew it came over tears. He bent and kissed her; and Helen Grant knew that at last she had made her life's election. There would be no further questioning. The curious processes of the personal will would be merged into that nobler conception of human fellowship, of duties on every hand.

Gordon bent over and kissed her again.

“I shall always need you. You are seldom out of my mind long at a time. The winter has been happier to me because we could talk of you, but we both agreed that you must know at once what had befallen me, and the uncertainty. I do not mean to distress my parents with it unless it should grow rapidly worse. You and Mr. Hildreth are my confidants. I shall go back to Yale and get my *Artium Magister*, and then look me up a place

to stand in and do the work that is nearest my heart."

"And you must let me help you," she said with deep fervor. "Whatever comes, we will share it together."

"Heaven bless you for that comfort. Though I don't think I ever doubted you. But I felt that you must know all, and that it lay with you to give me the right again; that I could hardly claim it."

"It *was* yours," she returned proudly.

They were silent for many minutes, clasping each other's hands in the delight of youth, and love, and confidence restored. Yes, she had missed the sure trust. She had been hewing out broken cisterns; she had been looking out over the wide fields, considering the harvest she should reap from self-advancement; and self was the tares that had sprung up among the wheat. Would the latter be strong enough to smother their unprofitable growth?



"DO YOU THINK I AM GOING BACK NOW WHEN YOU NEED ME?"

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CHAPTER XV

VARIABLE ATMOSPHERES

HELEN GRANT had said she should not sleep any, even if it *was* late when she laid her head upon her pillow. Her brain was alive with tumultuous thoughts, yet through it all was some soothing influence like the last strain of delicious music, and it lulled her to serenest slumbers. It was late when she went down to breakfast, in a half-bashful mood, as if her new resolve must be evident in her face—looking out of her eyes.

“Do you not think Mr. Hildreth looks poorly?” Mrs. Stirling asked.

“Mr. Hildreth?” Why, she had almost forgotten.

“He has always been so robust, I suppose we notice it the more easily.”

“The last of the journey was rather rough,” Helen returned. “But I hope the old scenes and the old friends will quite restore him.”

"But think of the splendid journeys!" interposed Lilian. "Oh, I do want to travel, to see these wonderful places. Isn't a tourist party nice, Miss Grant? I couldn't enjoy anything alone. And I'm afraid," glancing at Mrs. Stirling, "that aunt wouldn't want to go very far."

"No," with a smile. "Home is the best place for elderly people. But you may find some one."

"Where will you go next vacation, Miss Grant?"

Helen started, then laughed at her feeling of embarrassment.

"We had thought of Holland. But I don't know," doubtfully.

"I'll go to London first."

"That, I think, is the best. You hear your own language, and feel more at home. And there is a sort of motherliness that goes to one's heart."

"And think how long it is to vacation, to the real vacation."

"I am afraid it won't be long enough for me."

She paused a moment at the Hildreth house. Mrs. Ruden answered the door.

Mr. Hildreth had a rather restless night, but had just come down to his breakfast. He declared he felt better, though. Should she call the young gentleman?

"No," answered Helen, flushing. "I have not a moment to spare. I must hurry to school."

There were many cordial greetings, and everything went smoothly. But Helen felt in a strange, new world that she hardly dared to penetrate. She must keep close to the hourly duties. And somehow she found them mostly pleasant. The sunny day shed an exaltation all about.

Just as they were closing in the afternoon, the Hildreth carriage stopped, and a boy was sent up to see if Miss Grant would take a drive.

"How grand we are!" said Ada Cranston. "Do you suppose she is planning to catch that old man for his money? She hasn't had a single admirer so far. But school teachers are mostly old maids."

"That Mr. Palmer from Ridgewood was

wonderfully taken with her," said Meta Henderson. "Oh, girls, I hope she won't marry until I have graduated. I don't believe any one else could explain things so well; make you see through the puzzles. Why, these last ten days Westfield has seemed actually lonesome."

Ada wondered how the girls could be so blinded.

Helen went down, nodding several good-bys. Gordon was on the back seat, and held out his hand to her.

"Couldn't you stop a moment this morning?" he began, with smiling reproach.

"No, I couldn't possibly. We talked so late last night that I overslept."

"It seems like a dream to me, after all the doubts and thoughts. I am going to New York for a very thorough examination by Dr. Agnew again; then to Brooklyn to see my people. Another sister is to be married, and my younger brother has decided to study medicine. I may stay two or three days."

"Yes?" with a brief, indrawn breath.

"And you must go in and spend the even-

ings with him," nodding to the front seat. "He was very good last night. But there is so much still for us to say," and he pressed her hand.

She had not said half. She had come so near to disloyalty. What a sacred thing love really was! Why, she seemed just beginning to learn about it.

They stopped at the station, and Gordon sprang out. Mr. Hildreth gave the reins to Martin, and stepped over to the back seat, drawing the robe securely about both of them.

"I have had so many charges," and he laughed lightly. "But I think I am really well, only not quite as strong as usual. I don't know what I should have done without my excellent nurse. I think if Gordon's heart was not so set on the ministry he would make a most admirable doctor. I used to think of that when he was caring for Arthur."

"Do you hear from Mrs. Holman?"

"Occasionally. There was a letter, when I reached home. She is very happy. They went to Moscow and St. Petersburg in the summer. She inquired after the old acquaint-

ances, hoping that you and Miss Winters were on the high road to matrimony. Has her engagement been announced yet?"

Helen gave an amused smile. "I have not heard of it," she returned.

"And she still worships the Muses?"

"She has had several successes. Twice, I think, she has been paid for a poem. I wish she had real genius. It is so hard to succeed on a very small capital."

"And the new scholars? I have been away so long."

"They are doing well, and the older ones are doing still better. You would hardly believe what a fine debating club we have. Oh, we have not let Westfield deteriorate in your absence."

"Was I missed very much?"

He uttered it in a half-doubtful, half-amused tone.

"Oh, you were, you were! And if we had known you were so ill——" Her voice had a little tremble in it.

"I did not know myself until the worst was over. There was all that terrible business, and

I was shocked at the duplicity of the man I believed was going on so well. He came near wrecking my other friends. Now they have made a stock company of the concern and hedged it about with many safeguards. They are fine, honorable men; after all, you do find some in the world. I think we are not as badly off as when there could not be found ten righteous men," smiling a little.

"And your illness?"

"Well, it was that dreaded assailant, pneumonia. Only the best and most watchful care pulled me through. For three days and nights Gordon never left me, sometimes taking brief naps at my bedside when the doctor was there. But I had a good constitution, and I suppose there was some more work in the world that the Lord wanted me to do. Then we went to the beautiful, luxurious, health-giving places. At San Francisco I found out Gordon's misfortune. He told you?"

"Yes," in a tremulous breath.

"The doctor sent him to a man, cashier in a bank, who had had the same happening ten years before, and it had never grown any

worse. That gave us a good deal of hope. And there is no pain or suffering about it. We will see Dr. Agnew and depend a good deal on what he says. He is a brave, cheerful fellow, and whatever happens he will never come to want. But he was a little afraid—it was only right to tell you.”

“It *was* right,” she returned, with a sweet firmness in her voice. “As if that would make a difference!”

“Oh, I knew it wouldn’t. But I had told him about Athol. I dare say I was enthusiastic, as men are apt to be about a well-beloved daughter. And he thought you might have a splendid life of your own. And so you could, in these days when womanly courage, strength, and capability are being appreciated. Only a few vain and ignorant people are afraid of women being unsexed by superior education. But the highest crown of all is wifeness and motherhood, with an appreciative husband. Each gives a part of the holiest life to the other, and they are one in that true, high sense that is the crown of marriage.”

She had not been esteeming it in its holiest

light. She knew now from what source Leslie Morse was drawing her happiness and content. Oh, she had been blind, willful, self-seeking.

“So I count myself a happy man. You two will always be very dear to me—I hardly need tell you that. And, Helen, you need not fear for the future——”

“Oh,” she cried, “do not be too generous, too indulgent. Let us work our way along until the dark days come—if they should. And we shall always be your grateful children.”

“I want a little share in your happiness. You know, he knows now, how I missed mine, but God sometimes restores fourfold. He has given me prosperity and a heart to share it with my kind. But I have always wanted an abiding love in some young soul that I could watch as it grew and unfolded. There have been several young men that I have taken a deep interest in and assisted, but when they could do without me they went their ways, or, like the horseleech, cried for more. Gordon’s uprightness and integrity struck me all through the Holman episode. He would accept no more than a just payment. As if mere money

could have repaid him! And he has been a fine son to his father. I want Mr. and Mrs. Danforth to make me a visit, when Westfield adorns itself with the spring loveliness."

"Oh, how thoughtful you are for every one's pleasure."

Martin had turned homeward.

"You will come in this evening?" he said. "I have not seen you in so long, and there are such arrears of talk to make up."

Would she ever have time to take herself in hand, to analyze, to see where she had gone astray in her own vain self-estimation?

But she went in, bright and cheerful. How many selves there were to people! She had moments of exquisite happiness—and then conscience came in and clouded it over; said she really had no right to it until she had repented all the vain and egotistic aspirations.

But it was very pleasant to be sitting there, at the end of the library table, and Mr. Hildreth beside the grate, where he could watch every expression that flitted over her face. She, too, was delighted to glance up and find such appreciation. It reminded her of the old girlhood

days when she had read to Mr. Bell. How happy they were. Two lovely daughters, with their growing families; Shirley, who had slipped unconsciously into her place; Willard, who was growing into a fine, strong, upright man, fitted for public life some day; and though he adored Shirley and the babies, the vein of delicate romance that had pleased her so in Mr. Bell was quite lacking. But Mr. Bell could never have been a public man, nor addressed an audience with the fervor that inspired, nor pleaded an intricate case.

Mr. Hildreth had gone on with a cultured and ever widening-out life. It was not all for himself, neither did he disdain his neighbor of a simpler mind, or even an arbitrary one. He need not choose such a man for his friend. And he still liked youth, with its eager, heroic, and often crude ways, if only it were upright and truthful.

She said, presently, that she must go, but that she had had a delightful evening.

"You will have to come often until I get used to my boy's absence. I never can tell you all he has been to me during these months."

Helen put by many things to think of before she went to sleep. But there were the day's doings and thoughts; and before she was half through with them, she was asleep. It was difficult to go back six months to find the little paths through which she had wandered into John Bunyan's Country of Conceit, that after all was so near the Delectable Mountains.

"Miss Grant, are you engaged this evening?" asked Richard Eastman as school closed.

"Why—no," as if she were considering.

"The boys want to come up: Dinsmore and Benson and Lang—Lang has gone into the Henderson factory as a sort of assistant book-keeper, and likes it first rate. We were the worst crowd in school, weren't we? We're all ashamed of it now, and I do think we have all tried, since then, in real earnest. They and some other boys come once a week, as they did through the winter that I was ill. And you can't think how father likes it. I'm sorry I am an only child, father ought to have a houseful; he is very fond of boys. And we—they—are all getting along so well. And it's funny, but I don't believe there ever was an evening

but what some boy remembered something you had said. I suppose it is like planting a seed."

Helen flushed, and she felt the tears back of her eyes. That first year had been so very trying. Only, she had been enthusiastic and determined not to shame her college training, and all Mrs. Bell's lovely counsel had been fresh in her mind. Had she really sowed some good seed? And it had often seemed stony ground to her.

"Why, yes, Dick; I shall be very glad to see them; to see you all. Why, you are getting to be quite a missionary to the boys," and her eyes sparkled with pleasure.

She ran in to Mr. Hildreth's before she went to her own home. He held up a note.

"Yours came in mine, so we could both share alike and neither be jealous. And the news is good."

Yes, it was very good. Gordon had seen Dr. Agnew. The eye was just the same—had grown no worse—the rest of the nerves were strong and in good condition. There seemed nothing to fear at present. Now he

was to have a grand family visit. His father was well, though he *was* growing older, but his mother didn't seem to change a bit and was the sweetest mother in the world.

What a lovely thing to say about one; better than all the culture and all the ripening gained from arts and sciences. Would it be said about Mrs. Yarrow sometime when the world had forgotten that she had been president of a college?

"But I came to tell you we must put off the reading this evening. The first-year boys want to call on me in a party. Why—they are the alumni of the high school of Westfield! I didn't think of that when Dick was talking. It seems now rather funny to me," and she looked up with shining eyes.

He was studying her and the half smiles that rippled over her face. Then he said:

"I suppose you wouldn't want an old foggy like me to come in and look at you, just toward the last?"

"Why, yes! Oh, do! The high school is your great work, you know. I've heard all about the fight," laughing. "You knew we

had a new county superintendent? He is coming over—or up, or down—next week, and we must put on our freshest frills. Mr. Underwood is rather grumpy about it. He does hate to have the old things fussed over and called new.”

“Mr. Underwood deserves a good deal of credit. I should have been most sorry to have had him go away, but it was a well-deserved compliment. The new superintendent comes from Connecticut, I believe.”

“Yes. And now I think I must go and beg Mrs. Stirling to give us some cake and make us some coffee. It’s rather funny, it seems to me.”

“I think I must bestir myself or I’ll be quite a back number. Gordon and I met some delightful people in California. And their splendid university! Ah! well, we must be content to be little folk. So I must look up my neighbors and have some of the old Dons here—would it do?—to meet the new superintendent.”

“Why, that would be splendid! Talk to Mr. Underwood. Adieu.”

She kissed the tips of her fingers, and ran

away, like a lightsome-hearted girl, to ask Mrs. Stirling if they might have some cake and coffee and a fire in the parlor.

"We've nothing but odds and ends and some crullers. Jane will be pleased to make you a nice, fresh cake. And we ought to keep a steady fire in the best room——"

"With no one to sit by it? And this room so cheerful and homey?" laughing.

So they had a nice fire, and the parlor was lighted up. She placed the chairs about to take off the stiffness, and spread the few books on the center table. Something flashed into the thread of her thinking—what if Lilian should have a lover some day? Would he stay in the sitting-room until Mrs. Stirling retired? Or would Lilian pluck up girlish courage and demand something for herself? She did not worry about being an old maid now. The girls came in and stayed to tea, and Mrs. Stirling welcomed them. Sometimes a brother dropped in to take them home. *She* had never had much company. The mothers asked her out to tea because all the children wanted to have a little bit of her. Just now, she felt she

ought to have done more in opening the doors of true hospitality.

Well, she *was* surprised at the group of boys—they really were young men—that stepped into the lighted hall. Lawrence Dinsmore was a tall, well-developed, bright-looking, young fellow, dressed with neatness, but not foppishly, and he wore a golden-brown mustache. His hazel eyes were clear, with a decided expression that gave the whole face character. Benson and Lang were young fellows to be really proud of, and she gave them a smiling welcome.

“We have wanted to see you so much,” began Larry; “not just the little passing in the street, or meeting casually, but to have a chance for a real talk over things——”

“And I am very glad to welcome you,” she began, with a cordial smile. “Do you remember that you are the first alumni of the high school, and that the town ought to be proud of you?—will be proud of you as the years go on.”

“Why, I had forgotten all about it,” declared Carl, with a bright, eager look. “So

we were. But we wouldn't have been if it had not been for you, Miss Grant; we have said, at least fifty times, that we owe you everything. And we're glad to come and acknowledge it. And we're going to make first-class business men some day. We'll be the solid, substantial pillars of Westfield if we live long enough."

"Oh! Carl, that is grandiloquent," laughed Larry.

"Well, aren't you aiming to be president of the bank when the first row of officials die out? And Lang and I will make some business opening presently and set up as a firm. Oh, there's nothing like aiming high! And Dick will be an eminent physician. And I do hope you will stay here to see it all."

"And be quite to middle life like Miss Parker?"

"Oh, you couldn't be like that! Miss Grant, you have too much fun in you, and—and—too much sweetness——"

"Oh, thank you, Carl," but her face was scarlet.

"We all wanted you to have a little gift

to remember us by," began Dick. "I'm glad to have this the first meeting of the alumni, though I do suppose the girls will feel slighted not to be included, when they hear of it. There are books that we knew you'd like. And that winter—when we read Plato, and liked Professor Jowett's introduction so much—it will always be one of my favorites. Larry wanted to give you the Browning, so I couldn't choose that."

They were all wrapped, and tied with white ribbon, and, as she opened them, the beautiful bindings touched her heart and brought tears to her eyes.

"I don't know how to thank you," she faltered.

"Oh, it isn't a tithe of what you have done for us," said Larry. Dick only raised his beautiful dark eyes that had a lustrous sweetness.

Then she seated them, and they began to talk of the debating club they had formed, and what a fine speaker White was; and of the great ball game, when they had beaten the Ridgewoods on their own ground; and of the

skating—and wouldn't she tell them about Oxford, and the houses of Parliament? How splendid it would be to run over to England on a vacation tour when they had saved money enough!

She called in Lilian. They had some fun together, telling laughable bits and jokes, and then Mrs. Stirling invited them out to have a cup of coffee. As they were crossing the hall Mr. Hildreth came in and congratulated them all, and said he was glad to be their first guest. It was something he should be proud of.

"And it's awfully funny," declared Larry, "but we never thought of the alumni until Miss Grant spoke of it. Why, we're having just a grand time! Mr. Hildreth, can't we drink a toast to you in a cup of coffee?"

The gentleman rose and bowed, and then responded to the boyish but heartfelt toast.

And Larry said afterward, such a fine reply, so full of high wishes for them, was just a grand thing; and the evening was one of the best and jolliest they had ever spent.

Helen would have been amused if she had heard the boys talk on their homeward way.



“MR. HILDRETH, CAN’T WE DRINK A TOAST TO YOU IN A CUP OF
COFFEE?”—Page 352.

“Miss Grant is just splendid! There doesn't seem to be any other adjective to apply correctly to her. And what cubs we were at first! Oh, well, boys don't think of consequences, and they hate to be advised. Yet their fathers *do* know something, as they learn later on. I don't want her ever to go away. Oh, she ought to marry some fine man and have a nice home, where we could go now and then and have talks——”

“There isn't any one good enough for her, except Mr. Hildreth. Wasn't he a trump to-night? I was rather sorry when he entered the hall, but he was so gracious and cordial, not a bit stilted.”

“Oh, he's too old,” said Walter. “And I should just hate to have her an old maid!”

“But she could never be one of the queer, snappy kind. And she has such lots of courage to stand up for what she thinks right. Father says no man could have done any better that first year. And it did break up that wretched habit of beer-drinking that we considered so manly. Think of that George Farnham, who is only twenty-four and a reg-

ular sot—has been arrested twice! He was a nice fellow at the Ridgewood school, and then he went into the factory and was near the saloon. Miss Grant despises drinking.”

Dick had been silent, thinking of the afternoon that had brought him so much shame and suffering. Some other fingers clasped his, and the remembrance of the Hallowe'en frolic that had come so near being serious flashed over both minds. There were many events one would like to blot out—did God allow them to happen as lessons, warnings?

“Boys,” said Larry, “let's begin as they do at colleges, and hold an alumni meeting every year. We'll take in the girls if they will come, and we might ask this year's graduates to swell the numbers. And we'll have some invited guests; Woody, and Miss Grant, and Mr. Hildreth, and—but we mustn't get too many.”

“That will be capital,” responded Dick. “Yes, we must keep it in mind and be planning.”

At Mrs. Stirling's, they were clearing away the things, and talking over the pleasant time.

“I never would have believed those four

boys had in them the making of such nice men. For they are really promising young men, and they were terrors. They seemed to study nothing but destructive mischief. There can be fun without ruining people's property and making such a sight of trouble. I suppose poor Dick's accident called a halt. It seemed dreadful that he should have all the suffering. But he looks pretty well now, and I do think he has grown very handsome."

CHAPTER XVI

THE HIGHER OUTLOOK

GORDON DANFORTH returned on Saturday, though his father would fain have kept him for his Sunday services. But he was to report at college on Monday, and he wanted that last day with Helen. Just after dinner with Mr. Hildreth, the Reverend Mr. Henley dropped in.

“I saw your young friend leave the train, and I knew I should find him here,” he said, after the first greetings had passed. “And my chief errand is to him; perhaps a rather unwelcome one,” smiling vaguely. “I have not been up to the mark of late, and thought I would take a little holiday and have a change. A friend was to come yesterday to remain a week, and I was to start this morning. But, instead, there came a note, explaining that on account of a death he would have to disappoint me. Then, as I saw your friend walking up the street, I plucked up courage to come.”

He nodded and smiled over to Gordon, who flushed and looked uncertain a moment.

“If you knew how tired and actually worn out I feel, you would take a little pity on me out of your young vigor. I am getting to be quite an old man, and sometimes I feel that I have dealt out all my messages of cheer and strength. My people have always been kind and sympathetic with me, and we have been warm and dear friends for years. But I see so many new faces that sometimes I am quite at loss as to how I shall meet the new demands. Times change, methods change; we are more in touch with the great world, and this is, now and then, a burden on my mind. I think I must ask for a vacation presently, and get freshened up a bit. But—if you could give me to-morrow, I should feel so grateful. I can recall your talk of last summer and the comfort it was to me.”

Gordon had flushed and paled alternately, and experienced a momentary embarrassment. He had been called upon a number of times to bear witness to the length and breadth and height of God's messages to His world. But

he had planned for this Sunday somewhat to himself.

"If you think I could be of real service——" he began hesitatingly.

"You see, I had been counting on this respite, hoping it would restore me to some of the olden vigor. There has been considerable illness among my people, many of whom are going down the decline of life—as well as myself—and it has been a tax. Just a little rest would be a blessing. Can you deliver both sermons? Am I asking too much?"

Gordon had used a good deal of resolution to refuse his father the same request, promising to give him the gratification later on.

"I shall be glad to oblige you," he replied in a low tone. "But I am not very well prepared."

"You will say something fresh. They have heard me so often. I do, now and then, give them a chance to hear some of my brethren, and it is a treat to me to listen. Oh, I think you need have no fear. Thank you many times."

But the old clergyman lingered, exchanging

pleasant thoughts with Mr. Hildreth, feeling as if a burden had been lifted from his mind. He had been a faithful servitor of his Master, and a little rest by the wayside was good and pleasant.

Afterward Gordon hurried along the street and rang the doorbell. She had gone upstairs; he saw the light in her room.

"Yes, I will call her down," said Lilian. "I hope Mr. Hildreth——"

"Oh, he is well," in a quick tone. "It is just an errand."

But he went into the sitting-room. Mrs. Stirling was in the kitchen, consulting with Jane about breakfast. Lilian went through the end of the hall.

Helen had been half-expecting him, and was a little annoyed at the defection.

He took her hand, noting its half reserve.

"I had a most delightful time at home. I could not resist telling my joyful news. Mother remembers quite well when you were at Mrs. Aldred's. They both sent welcoming messages. Oh, I shall be so glad to have them know you well. And then Mr. Henley came

in to beg me to preach for him to-morrow. He seems not very well."

"Oh!" was all she said.

"I could not well refuse. But I mean for us to have a nice day——"

"And it will be nice listening to you. I am so glad for—for us all to have the opportunity," half smiling.

"Good-night, my darling. I must consider what I had better take for a subject."

"Something not too learned. We are a simple folk."

He kissed her and was gone. She went out to the kitchen.

"You may have the pleasure of listening to the Reverend Gordon Danforth, if you so elect, to-morrow. He preaches for Mr. Henley," she announced.

"Then we will be sure to go," was the reply.

Helen wondered if she was pleased or otherwise. The week had been so full, so busy, she said to herself, that she had hardly had time to consider several grave subjects that pressed upon her. Oh, she had surely consented. There was her lifework. She had

wanted to be a power, an influence in the lives of those around her. Was there anything worthier than this? And if sometime she should be sorely needed! If she was called to minister unto another instead of looking for self-advancement.

The church was simple and rather quaint, the oldest in Westfield; its congregation had many dear memories connected with it. And when the young clergyman stood up reverently, after the hymns and prayers were ended, and said in a grave, earnest tone: “‘Multitudes, multitudes in the Valley of Decision.’” Helen wondered vaguely, as if she had never met with the sentence before. Even Mr. Henley leaned over, as if it was something quite new and he must listen.

“When people had reached the mountaintops, the decisions had all been made, the seed sown, the life evolved—such as it was to be. It was in the valley, where the struggle and the fight, the falling back and discouragement, the rising up and taking hold again, was made. And there, in the valley, were the great host that no man could number, filled with every

desire, every want the world would ever know, aiming for the highest—whether it were intellectual or moral good; happiness that seemed to glow in the opening of the clouds above, and shine in enticing, resplendent beauty; worldly gain that dazzled in tempting visions; fame that was a meteor flash—all the hundreds of things the mind craves and reaches out eager hands to grasp. What it thinks best—what it needs and wants to keep life from being a waste—according to human, narrow thinking. There was such a vividness about the throngs, that one could see the pushing and struggling, the ambition that struck down weaker hands—that climbed on steps reared by others who had fallen back discouraged. And here all the decisions were made. One had to choose and hold fast the aim; to listen to the higher voices that called one to put aside self; to discover and pursue worthier resolves, greater undertakings—responding with joy and enthusiasm to that call to service for friend and neighbor—the faint-hearted, the down-trodden—shrinking from no demand made upon our services, each must decide

whether the endeavor shall be for God and humanity or towards self-serving. Every one must walk the Valley of Decision, either held by the Almighty Hand and led surely upward and onward, or wandering in crooked by-paths of twilight uncertainty. For in the end it must be one or the other. There was no middle ground."

Helen Grant was thinking it over during the afternoon as she sat alone. She had not been honest and fair with Gordon. What had brought about the disloyalty? What curious, enchaining ambition had lured her on, step by step? Was not the world's work God's work? Was not doing for "the least of these" as great in His sight as any learned effort? Was not the power and desire to bind up the bruised heart as worthy in His sight as to sway a multitude by beautiful thoughts and aims that could only bring dissatisfaction? Was not the haunting, spasmodic desire, the child of self-pride and a traitor to her first loyalty?

"Were you tired of me this morning?" he asked as he dropped in for a moment to

beg her, in Mr. Hildreth's name, to come to tea.

"It was a curious text. I wondered, at first, what you were going to make of it."

"We all have to push our way along the Valley of Decision, sometimes with what seems superhuman strength. But we *can* reach the mountain tops at last, if we take God's will for our guidance. And it makes the way so pleasant. After all, when we think of the little we give up, and set it beside the great gain——"

"Oh, you know I said I never could accept that hard life among the ignorant, the people of the wilderness; that I wanted refinement, companionship; the pleasure that higher cultivation brings; some leisure—some of life's satisfactions," and she gave a sudden, indrawn breath that was like a sob, while a flush overspread her face.

"My dear, I think you can do better work in a different sphere. Mr. Hildreth has told me of your influence over the boys, and your labors in the school. We have not all the same gifts. The paramount duty is using what we have for those about us; and if God

calls us up higher, to go gladly, nothing doubting."

She felt that night that it had been "a Sabbath day's journey"; one of the milestones along the way.

And now they were busy enough in school. She was thankful that Mr. Hildreth had shielded her engagement from any publicity. Gordon had been his guest, his friend; and that this kindly, elderly man admired her raised a question in some minds whether it would not be more than friendship.

Mr. Vanderveer, the new superintendent, was invited to dine with Mr. Hildreth and meet some of the people strongly interested in education. He did not ask any of the learned professors, but several of the parents and teachers. Mrs. Underwood was cordially invited to play the part of hostess. Both schools won favor and admiration, and it was a most enjoyable occasion.

"I think we took him somewhat by surprise," said Mr. Underwood. "And next year we shall raise our high school standard, so that it will admit to Cornell, where some

of our pupils are anxious to go. No, I shall never regret that I left the position for him. We have too many fine friends and neighbors here to give them up readily. And when a man is satisfied with what he is doing, let him take Carlyle's recommendation and be happy with it. I have thought a good deal lately that we are not simply to stuff the children's heads with theories and knowledges from the East and the West, but to make good citizens of them—upright and honorable men, armed against the temptations to become thieves, or defaulters, or drunkards. And to make the girls fine intelligent women, that they may know how to train their children. Oh, Miss Grant, you never expected me to preach sermons, did you? But that young friend of Mr. Hildreth's set me to thinking. What an earnest, vigorous, sensible fellow he is!"

Helen turned her face partly away that he might not see the wave of scarlet that flooded it. She knew she had always admired Gordon—it was not that she had been really disloyal to his love, but what she could do with her own self had grown, from a little thought,

to a dissatisfaction with what might be termed "a woman's destiny." She *could* work out something for herself. They might stand on a splendid equality. They were both so young and life was long; there was so much to do, and she would joy in doing it.

But if he needed her! If there should come years when her love would be a solace, give strength, perhaps, for them to work together! There were subtle harmonies in life belonging to the beautiful theme of love for another, unmindful of self. Had she been blind all this time? Had she accepted a great joy, yet held back part of the price? What had induced her to count as fetters the sacred obligations of marriage? True, she had not set it quite among the ideals of life. She could never have rushed into it as Shirley did, full of glowing hopes. She was too serious-minded, too practical.

"It shall all be made up to him," she said to herself. "We will work together; we will plant, and wait patiently for the harvest time. Perhaps I have wanted to gather my harvests too soon, and it has brought fruit not fully

ripe. There may be much seed sown that fails to spring up, though the sower may work with earnest endeavor."

Spring was coming in. It seemed to Helen that it had never been so full of beauty. Now that she was relieved of some of the school cares, she found leisure for rambles, or for occasional drives with Mr. Hildreth. But there was always a flock of girls hovering about her with their merry chat. At times it struck a serious chord, and she was a little surprised at the essential and vital points they raised; at their eagerness to take up the more important truths.

"You don't seem to care as much for us boys as you used," Allen Millard said in a complaining tone. "You are planning pleasures for the girls——"

"Oh, I think they are planning pleasures for me," with her bright, enchanting smile. "And you know you boys are so much in Mr. Boyd's care now—outgrowing me."

"Oh, we couldn't outgrow you. Mr. Boyd is nice—but it was so delightful at first when you had so many of the lessons. And you

used to talk about curious things and places in a way that fairly made us see them. And that gave me the resolve to go to college and learn all that I could."

"And teach it. Distribute it in the best and most generous manner. Knowledge is not all for ourselves. We must not be misers and hoard it, gloat over it in secret."

"Oh, dear! I wish you had been my big sister! Roslyn wishes it, too. She cares so much for you, Miss Grant."

"And I care a great deal for all you three children," she said, deeply moved.

"Ruth is studying with all her might and main to get into the high school. The children love you so much."

She laughed pleasantly, but she knew that there were some who did not. Ada Cranston had never forgiven her interference in the foolish boy-and-girl affair that she was sure was a life-long love. And there were some others, with no real ambition, who were always slipping out of tasks, and angry when called to account.

Dick came in, now and then, for a good

talk, and Lawrence Dinsmore had come to be very friendly. His steady improvement in both moral and intellectual tone gave evidence of higher ideals that pleased her very much. But Dick said, with a tremble in his voice:

"Oh, Miss Grant, I hope you will never go away from Westfield! You seem just like a part of it."

"But you are going to college."

"Still, I am coming back for vacations. I want to find you here and have you for an adviser and a confidant; for I mean not to do anything I can't confess to you and father. I shall think of you both, if I should be tempted, and I do believe it will give me strength."

"Pray for that greater strength," she returned in a low tone.

"It must be so nice to have a sister one could rely on and who would have faith in one—believe that he would try to do his best. I think I liked being an only child until I have come to know the Hendersons well. They are really ambitious for each other, proud of any little triumph one of them gains, and

so fond of one another, though they sometimes do have little tiffs. And their mother is like another girl with them!"

He rarely spoke of his own mother. At times her fondness really irked him. She wanted him to have everything, she invited little companies for him, and made herself agreeable to the young girls in a sort of flighty way that distressed him. After a while she had consented to have the auto sold. Mr. Eastman had not cared especially for it, and Dick would never share it again—he could not think of it without a shudder. He was a tall, handsome fellow that any mother might well be proud of.

"I'm glad I am not going away this year," he began presently. "Harry White has chosen Cornell, and Mr. Boyd is coaching him. Mark wants to go to Yale. I'll have another whole year, but if I went to Columbia I could come home every week, and that would please father best."

"Columbia is fine. And New York is a great city. Somehow, I shouldn't enjoy being very far from it."

He had been walking home with her after school, and now said a lingering good-by. What friends she had made of these boys, and they had come to respect Mr. Underwood so much. Oh, she would stay another year, surely.

Then Leslie and Mr. Morse sent her an urgent invitation to visit their new home. It was so beautiful, worth waiting for, Leslie said. But she should always be glad she had shared his work among the poor and ignorant. The world was so much wider than they had dreamed of in college days. There was need of good fellowship everywhere; of a helping hand held out to these people to assist them to the little they could enjoy in their narrow ways—into better modes of thought.

Newberry suggested Westfield somewhat, for it was beginning the march of improvement, although quite against the wishes of the old families, who had reigned undisturbed for almost two hundred years and were satisfied. To awaken these from their complacency, to keep the newer element from a sort of vain-

glory in thrift and industry, and from overstepping the boundaries of consideration, and to lead them into good fellowship, was surely a much needed work.

The stone church was old and ivy-covered, with quite an English aspect. The rectory adjoining was embowered by trees, and would be half hidden by roses and shrubbery in the later season. That would conceal the plain framework and give it a charming appearance. It was partly furnished, and certainly homelike.

“It seems almost as if we had gone into heaven,” Leslie said, pleasure lighting up her sweet eyes. “No smoke or soot, no clangor of machinery, no dirty, crowded streets, little tumult of children. I wonder if we shall find work enough to keep us busy—content?”

“It will be a new thing to try to harmonize these contending elements,” said Mr. Morse. “Before, the truly rich were across the river out of our reach, and there was only the different degrees of labor and poverty. Now these good old families, who scout public schools and factories and labor, must be brought to

see that these things are necessary for the world's advancement, and that, if we do not go on, we certainly do retrograde; that education is the common factor of the world to-day. I am glad to try my hand at another of the world's problems. Leslie has been a brave, uncomplaining wife, and I am glad to transport her to more delightful surroundings."

Leslie looked a little worn, Helen thought, but she was sweet and joyous. On Saturday Miss Morse joined them, and they had a most pleasant visit, enjoying many discussions as to the variety of parish work.

Westfield seemed more inviting to Helen. There had never been any rigid caste there, they were so near the other smallish towns. And they had a certain commendable ambition to be a part of the great world.

Then came the Easter holiday; just a week. Helen went to Kingsland, where the two girls were in the midst of wedding talk. On the first of July Mr. Royse was to take part in a Musical Festival in London. They would be married in the church the last of June, and

go at once, taking in a bit of the Continent, and returning the last of August. Wilma was full of joy and gayety.

“It isn’t as if we were going away off somewhere to live,” she said to Helen. “I think it would break my heart not to see Aunt Juliet for a year or two. And Elma is happy and glad for me. I suppose some day she’ll have a lover. And won’t it be funny to see Edith Foxcroft? Why, we didn’t even dream of such a thing last year. What a splendid time we did have!”

There was some shopping to do; Leslie came down for a luncheon with them. And there was Shirley, pretty and matronly, with her two babies. Helen longed to see Mrs. Bell and have a dear, confidential talk with her. But she thought she would rather not be in the hubbub with all the gay young people. Gordon spent a day with them, and then hunted up the Osbornes.

“I would stay over Sunday with Mr. Hildreth, but I have promised to do a little clerical work for two or three weeks. I have quite a lot of things to go over, but I shall be

all right when the time comes," nodding his head with assurance. "And then we must decide——"

"Oh, not until next year," she entreated.

"We will talk it over at our leisure!" laughing.

"And your——" She paused, with an anxious compression of the lips.

"Oh, don't think of it, dear. I have left it in God's hands. We will enjoy to-day and not cloud it with what may come to-morrow."

How many times Helen had returned to Westfield with a thrill of pleasure! Would she go away sometime and find a new home?—make new friends? Well, why should she fear? All the events that had come to her thus far had been pleasant, why could she not be trustful?

She was tired with the talk and excitement, and the quiet of her room seemed grateful. There were some gifts, as usual, and a beautiful set of books from Mr. Hildreth. He came in the next day. Yes, he had had Gordon for

a day and night, and found him in excellent spirits. And she must tell him about the sweet girl soon to be a bride.

"Everything will come at once," she said in a tone of assumed complaining. "All the graduations, and I must do my utmost not to have mine a failure."

The girls were roused to ambition, and planned numerous attractions that did not interfere with their studies. The boys took matters easier, though they were resolved to do their classes credit. Saturday was given over to pleasures. The boats were out with flying streamers; the tennis court was full of gay, flitting figures; there were some field games that won them credit.

Helen, Miss Jaynes, and Mr. Underwood, with Mr. Boyd's help, went over the curriculum for the next year.

"We must raise the standard higher. Ridgewood did this last year. Mr. Vander-veer is quite resolved that the best schools must reach the college requirements. There will be only a few to go, but you want the name and the fame. And I have quite a crowd to enter.

You will be kept pretty busy next year," and he gave a cordial nod and smile.

"How proud he is," thought Helen.

And he wondered how things would have gone without Helen Grant. The girl's face had changed a great deal, had gained an added womanliness. He thought it much handsomer than when he had first seen it, attractive as it was. He remembered that he had doubted her power to hold, to govern. She had not been stern or arbitrary, but she had won the love of the children, the respect of the older ones. He was proud of the business record of the four boys of whom nothing but evil had been predicted; whom he had been most sorry to accept for the high school. And Richard Eastman had endeared himself to all by the bravery and patience he had shown under the long, wearisome strain. A son any father might be proud of now.

"I don't know how we will make out next year," he said to his wife, after he had read his evening's paper. "Vanderveer marked us up pretty stiff, but no higher than college demands. Boyd is fine—a thorough teacher—

and few know what that comprehends. I think if I were he I'd give up the chapel business and strike out for a professorship—he has his degree. But I am glad to keep him.”

“And Miss Grant?” There was an odd whimsical light in her eyes.

“Oh, I've taken a five years' lien on her—it has four years yet to run.”

“Mr. Hildreth will marry her before that. I do believe he is thinking seriously of it. He is an ardent worshiper.”

“Nonsense!”

CHAPTER XVII

THE CROWN OF EARNEST LIVING

It was early June. Everything was a-bloom, the air sweet with rose, honeysuckle, and syringa. Many of the porches were garlands and festoons of loveliness. And in the late afternoon the sweetness seemed more penetrating.

They were walking along the river bank, shaded by tall trees. Tangled shrubbery and peculiar water growths seemed nodding to their shadows in the stream, as if they were sentient beings.

Gordon had been watching for her as she came out of school, delayed a little by marking some exercises. Most of the scholars had dispersed. She caught sight of him and, with a hurried, yet agitated step, went to meet him.

"What has happened?" she inquired breathlessly.

"Oh, did my sudden appearance alarm you?" and the amused light crossing his face showed there was a laugh behind it.

Helen looked disconcerted.

"There is some important business. I tried to write it, but I couldn't wait for your answer. Such things are better discussed, as country people say, 'by word of mouth.' So, as there was nothing to prevent, I came down. Let us walk along the river. What a glorious day it has been! And, oh! look at the wild roses. Let me gather some for you."

She was strangely confused. All the week she had been thinking of the future that must soon be placed on a firmer basis or—what was the alternative?

He fastened the roses at her throat, and kissed her, glancing into her eyes that drooped under his gaze.

"Do you wonder what it is?" he inquired half jestingly, piqued by her curious silence.

"Yes; what is it?" courageously. "A matter of destiny?"

"It is a matter that concerns you—our future. And you must help me decide."

"Oh, you are going away again!" with a quick, indrawn breath.

"Not unless you send me." There was a mysterious expression in his eyes and hovering about his mouth. It took her back to last summer—to the sudden joy that had overwhelmed her.

"The matter is this: I have had the proffer of a position in our own beautiful city. Most young clerics would not stop a moment to consider. It is an assistantship in one of our finest churches—a great compliment, even *I* take it. They always have two assistants; one had a call to Nashville a month ago, and, oddly enough, one of the wardens had spent a fortnight at Niagara last summer. I was asked to preach one evening not long ago."

Helen studied him intently.

"And you do not want to accept it," she said.

"Ah, how could you guess?" in amazement.

"What is it like?"

"It is one of the fashionable churches. It would take one into the best society, so called. Some of the finest people belong to it. They

are generous, they have a mission, they have a home for their own poor and people to attend to them. They have beautiful, reverent, ornate services. They walk in a narrow way, and do not go outside. The society is unexceptionable. There are many things you would enjoy. I had not dreamed of offering you anything like this. And from there, one would be likely to have an excellent call."

"But it is not what you desire?"

"Frankly, it is not my ideal for myself. I want to work for the Master; I want to train souls to see what it is to live in the larger world, to understand truer relations to God and to immortal life—duty to one's neighbor; a higher sense of justice; to make the word of God grow into the daily life, and really to love our fellowmen; to raise them to a sense of divine manhood. Not just the very poor, but the nice middle classes. To share their joys, their sorrows; to be an 'ever present help' in their times of temptation; to live in their lives, as one may say——"

He paused abruptly, his face alight with the pure glow of love for humanity.

“And you thought—*I* might like this more fashionable life!”

“I thought you ought to know. Oh, there are many delightful things about it—cultivated people, music, talks that stir one's brain, the entrée of beautiful houses, and the meeting traveled people who can discourse about things that are at the very ends of the earth.”

Had she not been dreaming of some of these, going up until she stood on that higher round? It would spoil and mar the work he had intended to do, blight that lovely spiritual life after which he was striving. Yet he would do it for her. Would he really, when it came to the point?

“Oh, you must not!” she exclaimed impulsively. “You would be miserable in a life hedged about by conventionalities. And so much true and noble work has come to you, has filled your very soul with joy. Why, you would be starved, in that social round. And for me——”

She made a long pause, her eyes fixed on the softly flowing river, her mind suddenly, subtly going over some of the past. She had not

exactly been hewing out broken cisterns, they were all along the wayside, the work of many pilgrims who had gone astray; and she had looked for the sparkle of water where there was none. One would grow thirsty after a while.

“Perhaps I ought not to have taken your life into my keeping,” she said tremulously. “I do not understand myself. So many ways have opened before me—so many strange thoughts that have been almost desires; pride and vanity of self. Gordon, you had better let me go——”

“No,” he returned, with infinite tenderness in his tone. “There are a great many by-paths in life, and in our weakness and vagueness we sometimes go a little way in them. But the voice calls to us, and if we follow it we shall come back to the right haven. I cannot give you up. Why, we two have a work to do together or it would not have followed us all our lives as it has. Think how our paths have crossed! Has it not been a certain faith in each other that has nourished the tender plant of love? And there is all

the rest of life for its growth. Oh, I am not afraid."

His tone, his look, his faith electrified her.

"We will let the greater things go by. We shall find some place to do our best work, and we will take it together joyfully, because it is God's will for us."

It was coming out of a darkness that she had said to herself would lead to a finer light. And now the light shone all around her. What a foolish girl she had been to puzzle her brain about things that had never existed.

"Oh," she said, "we must go back. Yes, it is the real, true work that brings satisfaction. And if you want to go down among the poor and lowly, I will go too. You shall guide—and I will follow."

"My darling!" And his tone was full of joy.

Then they turned and walked in silence, each heart too full for any words. She was filled with a strange, delicious content.

His evening was spent with Mr. Hildreth, and they discussed the proffer Gordon had received.

"You see, it would hamper me in the things I long mostly to do. I would rather take a mission station. I should be of more real service in the vineyard. Only, I should not want to put Helen in any such place. Her talents and acquirements can do better work elsewhere. But it was right to give her the choice."

Then it was all at peace between them. Mr. Hildreth had sometimes wondered.

Helen answered Mrs. Yarrow's letter that she had laid by some months ago. She had written, but she could never answer that quite truthfully.

And then she threw herself, soul and brain, into her school duties, wondering a little if she should be here next year. One year more would not take much out of their lives.

"Oh, Miss Grant, you *are* working too hard," Mr. Boyd said. "Our graduates are quite sure to go through. I never saw a more ambitious lot. You certainly have the power of inspiring them."

She smiled. "You and Mr. Underwood

will make me vain. It is not a good plan. I might be considering some higher step."

"I don't know what we would do without you."

Was this appreciation and regard the harvest?—the fruits of what she had sown? There was the humility of earnest purpose in her heart, and thankfulness that she had succeeded so well.

She had to run away to Kingsland for Wilma's wedding. It was earlier than they had expected, on account of a Musical Festival in London that Mr. Royse had been engaged for. A pretty church wedding at noon, with a joyous bride in her white array, given away by "Uncle" Howard, and a group of lovely, diaphanous maids standing in a semi-circle. Certainly Miss Craven had made it a beautiful occasion. She, who had had no girlhood in her own life, crowned this with a mother's love.

There was a reception afterwards, with many friends to wish the young couple Godspeed. All the Travis family, Shirley and her

husband, Leslie, and the hosts of new friends they had made.

Juliet was fain to keep Helen all night after the bridal couple had gone.

"Oh, I can't possibly," she protested. "There is so much yet to do. How you will miss her."

"It is the way of life, and not even an own mother should stand in the way of a child's happiness. And, as she says, it is not as if we were going to live far apart. She will have a very sweet and tender mother. Oh, I wonder when we shall have another nice long time together! You must come to me when school closes. Have you any plans?"

"No," with a vague intonation, and a tumultuous throb at her heart.

"It will be a good deal as to what Elma would like. She must not miss her sister too much. Yes, we will consider. After school closes, come to me."

Helen thought she would be very glad to. She went back on an evening train, and Lilian had asked Dick to go with her to escort Helen home.

Yes, it had been a beautiful wedding, and a delightful time with all the friends afterward. She had had hard work to get away.

"How lovely your Miss Craven has been to those girls," Lilian said, with a touch of envy. "And they were no real relation."

"A great many people have been very good to *me* who were no real relation," returned Helen, with a sweet gratefulness in her tone.

"Well, I don't know as any one could be better than Aunt Emma. But she was my mother's sister. And I am glad enough to be here."

As she was going up to her room, Lilian added, "There is a letter for you that was left at school. Allen Millard brought it up."

She was very tired and it was late, so she just glanced at the address. No, it was not from Gordon. A rather careless superscription, slanting downward. "Westfield High School." Most of her friends knew her street and number. So she opened it with a touch of curiosity, and turned over to the signature.

"Miss Ada Cranston."

A short laugh escaped her lips. Now she

recalled the fact that the girl had not been to school so far the present week, and had not taken her examinations. Could it be possible that she had heard from her youthful lover? That thought roused her interest, so she began to read.

It commenced with a formal "Miss Grant."

She was not coming to school any more. On Sunday evening she had received an offer of marriage from a gentleman they had known some time. He was not very young, but had a nice, steady position, so there would be no years of weary waiting—as he could take care of a wife at once—and she should probably be married some time in the summer. She had loved Edgar very much, with the first pure, fervent affection of a girl's fond heart. With any encouragement she would have waited for him; but he had proved weak, and base, and recreant to the holiest trust of life, and she had torn him out of her heart; that, though it had bled a while, it was full now of detestation for both father and son who could so outrage a loving girl's trust. The man she was to marry was a hundred times

nobler, and had healed the wound with his delightful tenderness. She had always despised school teaching, which was sure to turn one into a queer old maid in the end. Her books would be found in her desk, and she was more than glad to say good-by to school.

How Helen did laugh over the absurd mis-sive! Yet she hoped the lover would be good and kind to the foolish girl, whose two aims in life were—marriage, or teaching school, because it was genteel. From the depths of her heart Helen wished her joy.

She took the letter to school with her the next day, and laid it before Mr. Underwood.

"What rot!" he exclaimed, between sarcasm and indignation. "The girl and her mother are both fools. A high old teacher she would make!"

"You can announce to Mr. Mills that his son can return without any danger of an enslavement."

"Oh, yes. That is the best outcome of the ridiculous nonsense. And he will be glad. You can never quite tell how far 'the outrage

of a loving girl's trust ' might lead her. Edgar was a nice chap, and—the fates preserve him from another such adventure.”

Examinations went very well. Of course there would be a Commencement. And couldn't they have a regular Field Day? They could do some first-class stunts now. Then if the boys chipped in they might have a jolly spread afterward. Mr. Boyd thought it would be fine.

“Why—yes,” and the light of interest irradiated her face. “Talk to Mr. Underwood about it.”

What gay Field Days they used to have at college—all girls, too! And how odd that the big boys came to *her* first about any plan.

Mrs. Stirling sat looking over the paper that evening.

“Why, see here!” she exclaimed. “Mr. Henley has actually resigned. I know there has been some talk of such a thing, and he was offered a six months' vacation. I supposed it would rest there. I think he has been here a good thirty years, and he is quite an old man—a good man, too. I've never heard

a word said against him. Dear, what a change it will make! I wonder—oh! Mr. Hildreth must have known, they have been such friends.”

Yes. Mr. Hildreth had known. The very week after Gordon had filled his pulpit, Mr. Henley had come in and spent an evening with his friend to talk the matter over. A vacation would be all right; but the resignation rather shocked him at first.

“It is a matter that requires some consideration,” Mr. Hildreth said slowly.

“I have given it that. I have consulted two of my vestrymen, and they saw the force of my reasoning. Many of my old parishioners are dead. New ones have come in. You must see that the town is changing every year. The work is changing also. It needs a young and vigorous man, who can go out to them, who has the new methods, the new knowledge—or rather, the new ways of presenting them. Thirty or forty years ago, when a fever or pestilence broke out we called it a judgment of God. Now we clean up our cities and institute hygienic measures.”

"That is most true. You have not fallen behind, however," with a friendly smile.

"I haven't strength for this new work. I have no heart to study the new sciences, only in the most desultory fashion. And, my friend, I long for a little rest, a chance to travel leisurely, to see what other people are doing, believing; to fortify myself against the flood of plausible, dangerous beliefs. Now I cannot preach against them, I do not understand them."

"But you have been a good and faithful soldier."

"And soldiers can be retired. I want a young man to come, who is fresh and eager in his beliefs and methods; who can go among the young with the certain courage and attractiveness that wins. Every town of any note has a Young Men's Christian Association—we have none. And there are other matters near my heart that I cannot undertake. Oh, you must see that this step is best. A few years hence there might be some dissatisfaction; now everything is pleasant, and I shall take with me the love and respect of my people.

It would be wisdom to go before they tire of me. Then I want rest and refreshment. Two or three years hence Mrs. Henley and I may be too old to enjoy traveling, then we can spend the evening of our lives in delightful retrospection."

It was all true. It had crossed Mr. Hildreth's mind, but he had put it off to the future. The clergyman had been a warm friend.

"There is another thing," Mr. Henley said after a pause. "Mr. Bates spoke of this. Do you know anything about the young man who so kindly preached for me? I felt so utterly miserable that day. What are his plans? He will make something beyond a brilliant preacher, he will be a very earnest, sensible, judicious worker. My people were all pleased with him. I saw they enjoyed the extempore speaking. I could not acquire that now. Mr. Bates thought, if he was obtainable—and really urged me to learn if he had any settled plans."

Mr. Hildreth's heart gave a quick leap. Then he checked himself, but the ardent longing would not down. To have Gordon here—

the man who had become a son to him in affection!

"He has been in orders for a year. He is at Yale now, to take his Master's degree. I think it is quite possible that he would come."

"Then we had better see, before any other church lays claim to him. He is not likely to go begging."

"He had a very fine assistantship offered him, but it was at one of the most fashionable of our churches. He has entered the Master's service for work, with a singleness of heart that is every way admirable. I have known him in some positions, trying ones, too, that bring out the mettle of a man. He was my companion all last winter, you know."

"I like his moderate views. I distrust these ideas that would overturn everything at once. We had a long, delightful talk that Sunday. I feel that the church would be fortunate in such a leader. I shall ask Mr. Bates to see that the matter is acted upon at once."

Then they discussed various town matters until the good clergyman bade him a warm good-night.

Mr. Hildreth had dreamed of this, but loyalty to his old friend would have kept him from proposing the matter. He coveted Gordon as a son. If he could have them both, his life would be crowned with content.

These were busy days at school. Mr. Underwood cordially approved of the Field Day. Back of Mr. Henderson's there was a tract of land, some day to be opened for a street. They considered whether they could put it in any kind of condition. They could have the tennis court for a game.

Then came a splendid offer from the club house of their grounds, and whatever of the rooms they would need. Several of the fathers had engineered this through.

"In view of this," said Mr. Underwood, "let us make our Commencement as simple as possible, and have the other the day after, if you like. I cannot have you tired out beforehand."

But they decorated the assembly room with flags and red-white-and-blue crêpe paper, and great roses and carnations made by the girls.

Now that they knew their standing they were very happy. A larger number of the girls were to be among the graduates. This time they passed the boys.

All the senior class was on the stage, though the second division was not to graduate. The girls made a pretty show in their white dresses and eager, rosy faces. The assembly room filled up rapidly. Meta Henderson was afraid it would be an old story, but Mark said, "It's going to be a grand old story for some years to come, and the audiences will grow larger and larger. You'll see," with a confident nod. "And that alumni business just takes my time altogether."

The exercises were admirable. The Glee Club was in fine voice. The class prophecy was not a mere burlesque this time. Then diplomas were distributed. Mr. Henley made a brief address, in which he spoke of severing his connection with the church, but declared that he should always retain a lively interest in the school—which he hoped to see a famous institution—and in the town, that had before it a fine future if it kept on the lines of

moral and spiritual advancement, the corner stones of which must be integrity, honesty, and truth.

There was a delightful social time afterward. It did seem as if half the town must be there. Helen, by this time, had met many of the fathers, and some others of the business men. Mr. Underwood brought up Mr. Mills and introduced him. He was a nice, wholesome-looking man, but she thought he had rather a funny gleam in his eye.

"I wish my boy was here among them," he began, "but he can't come until next week. I didn't know that I could have him at all; but Mr. Underwood told me that his charmer had directed her fascinations elsewhere, in a more sensible manner. I think Edgar has gotten over it as well, and he really longs to come back to school. I owe you and Mr. Underwood a good deal for taking the matter so promptly in hand. It was an extremely silly affair."

Mr. Mills did laugh, then, and Helen smiled.

"He was very manly about it," she said, "and I think the boys will be glad to have

him back. He gave promise of being a good scholar."

They all went home tired, but happy and full of thoughts about the morrow. And it did not rain, though now and then the sun went under a cloud. The club house grounds filled up and presented a pretty sight; girls in their best frocks and flower-bedecked hats; mothers and fathers and some of the clubmen anxious to see how the youngsters would acquit themselves.

There was some fine sprinting. Five boys kept so evenly in line that three hands touched the tape at the same instant. A great cheer applauded them. Then the vaulting was excellent, "good enough for a full-fledged college," said some one. High jumping followed, but the most beautiful of all was a military drill that was Mr. Boyd's pride; and they went through the evolutions with splendid precision and grace. The exercises wound up with a game of baseball, of much interest to the spectators. Mothers and daughters floated around until summoned to the banquet, which had assumed greater proportions than the boys

had planned, for some of the fathers had "chipped in."

"The most splendid time yet!" declared the boys, and they gave a vote of thanks to the club committee, with three rousing cheers and a tiger.

They were all tired enough to go home, and just a little bit glad that they did not have to go to school the next day.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE GOLDEN HARVEST

A TELEGRAM in its yellow envelope was handed to Helen by Jane, as she opened the door. She tore off the end, having no opener at hand.

"Latin oration. Banquet to-night. Call received. Will decide to-morrow when I see you."

"Oh, I wonder where it is?" she mused. "I think it will break my heart to leave West-field." For it seemed now as if the harvest sheaves stood ready for the gathering, and the tares had withered, overgrown by the strength of the wheat. A vital warmth and interest stirred every pulse. But if a higher love called her away?

Breakfast was late, at least they sat over it a long while, talking of yesterday's sports.

"It was splendid in the club people, wasn't it?" commenced Lilian. "And the boys were just fine, thanks to Mr. Boyd's training. And Mr. Palmer is awfully sweet on you, Miss Grant."

Helen's face was scarlet. She had been so interested and happy she had hardly noted it; but she recalled it now, and gave an embarrassed laugh.

Mr. Hildreth walked in. There was something mysterious in his face, a joy shining in his eyes. He had improved, and looked quite like his olden self.

"I am a newsmonger this morning, though I dare not announce the sequel. Trinity Church has given the Reverend Gordon Danforth a call. He is coming to-day, in his new dignity, though I don't suppose he will wear his hood to travel in. And I am empowered to take the announcement to Mr. Conover, so that the town may know it by night. I think it will give general satisfaction."

"And I am glad we are to have a young clergyman; to grow older along with the younger members," exclaimed Mrs. Stirling.

"Every one who spoke of him liked him so. I was afraid we might be without a shepherd for some time, it is often so hard to get people to be of one mind. Oh, were you not working for him, Mr. Hildreth?"

He smiled. "Not as fervently as Mr. Henley was. The call was unanimous. And I am glad the work will go straight on without any break. Were you not proud of yesterday's work, you two schoolma'ams?"

"Well, it was the high school that carried off the honors," said Lilian. "But we—Mr. Briggs," laughing archly, "sent up nineteen scholars. And there were ten that just missed by a little. We didn't have Miss Parker to train them, either."

"A pretty good showing. Mr. Briggs is doing excellent work. I think we are all on the mending line," with a humorous smile.

Then they rose, and two of them walked into the sitting-room.

"You had heard?" Mr. Hildreth assumed.

"There was a telegram last night. Oh, let me get it," and she ran upstairs in a tumult

of emotion. Such a little while ago Westfield was her Mecca. Now——

“Oh, he will accept. There is plenty of work for him to do, even if we have no real slums. Don't you suppose ‘the better class,’ as it is called, need ministering to? You know I have seen a great deal of him. And I shall have my two children. I shall have ‘the oil of joy for mourning,’ a harvest, for the days when the desert was my lot.”

His hand was over her shoulder. “Yes,” she answered softly. “Yes.”

Then he turned and went out of the door. She passed upstairs again and busied herself putting her room in order. She had been so full of school matters that this probability had not crossed her mind. Just now all objections were swept away as to whether she would like it—whether she could fill the place satisfactorily. She could make two people very happy. There would be new work for her to do. And there were her years of training.

Gordon Danforth came to her first, and they went into the cool, shady, rather stiff parlor.

“I *was* surprised,” he began. “I thought

they might ask me to supply the pulpit for a month or so, but the call was so—so earnest—so unanimous. But you shall decide.”

“I had almost decided to remain another year, to ask you to wait——” There were tears and smiles struggling in her face. “But I wonder—ministers’ wives are expected—oh! I don’t know,” and she hid her face on his shoulder.

“I think that is mostly the minister’s consideration. We make many unwise choices, I must admit. I have a different way of looking at it. A clergyman’s wife may so easily make or mar his best endeavors. She does want some experience of the world, and a love for the work. And they must both be righteous stewards of the faculties God has given. They need to make religion attractive in good works, not merely beautiful sentiment. Helen, you have done some fine work here, you have the strength and courage and truth that I most admire. You will make my life stronger to spread abroad the glad tidings, to gather the straying into the fold. Oh, you need not feel afraid!”

Was this not among the best, the grand things of life? She looked at her old ambitions; they were tempered by something higher and finer than mere worldly aims. And she would still work among those she had come to love.

They went to the dear friend who awaited them, and Gordon wrote his acceptance, which was received with fervent joy by Mr. Henley, and gave great satisfaction to the committee.

"For I feel now that I am not breaking off old ties and associations," said the old clergyman. "I shall come and listen and be refreshed."

The engagement could no longer be kept a secret. Helen felt that Mr. Underwood must be informed at once, and he received the news with the keenest disappointment.

"I had counted on at least another year," he said. "Then I suppose I would have begged for another, and so on. Miss Grant, you have spoiled my whole vacation. I can't fill your place,—I don't expect to. But a girl like you ought to have the best there is in life, and most women think that is a congenial

marriage. Since Mr. Hildreth vouches for the young man, I must be satisfied, I suppose," in a comically disconsolate tone.

Mrs. Underwood's congratulations were most warm and heartfelt.

"I've been afraid, all the time, you would take Mr. Hildreth; and though he would make a splendid husband for you if you were five-and-thirty, you would miss the exquisite joy of young happiness. I like Mr. Danforth, and we shall all be glad to keep you both. Oh, my dear Miss Grant, heaven send you all the joy and happiness you deserve. Husband will be sorry enough to lose you, but we will both be glad to keep our friend. And I know Mr. Hildreth wouldn't have listened if the young man had not been unexceptionable."

"But I have known him a long while," returned Helen, smiling through the flushes that swept over her face.

"Oh, tell me the story. I'm so fond of true love stories. Somehow, you have grown very dear to us both."

Mrs. Underwood thought it a lovely

romance. "And you are just the girl to have a romance in your life."

There was no keeping it a secret. A bevy of girls, headed by the Hendersons, came up to congratulate her, and to rejoice that she was not going away. "And you are just the kind of minister's wife we shall all like. Only—can't you be married here in Westfield? It would be the dearest, loveliest thing!"

Helen's face was in a flame. She wondered, mirthfully, whether it would ever turn white again. Mrs. Underwood and Mr. Hildreth were of the same opinion. Surely Helen did not have any real home!

How could she refuse him, after he had said, "My dear child, it will give pleasure to so many. And now I want to explain to you that it is my intention to settle an income on you, as salaries of young clergymen are never very high. And a woman who has earned money for herself would feel hampered in dozens of small ways. I have no near relatives,—a few worthy pensioners that I shall provide for if they outlive me. Why should I not have the pleasure of doing something

out of pure love? It will be my wedding gift to you; for you two are like children to me—the children I longed for and have missed.”

“Oh, you have always been so kind. And this is—is too generous,” and her voice broke, as she hid her face in her hands.

“No, it is just right.”

Why should she not give them this pleasure? Juliet demurred. But, somehow, it appeared to get taken for granted.

And Helen seemed to step into that larger, serious womanhood, touched with the sacred fire of love and truth, that was to make life nobler and better for those around her. She had hoped and longed to take part in the world's advancement; was there not enough to do here? Could she not make the higher virtues attractive to these young people?—strengthen them in the ways of integrity? Girls needed it as well as boys. There was work to do on every hand; one need not wander uncertainly abroad to find it. One stumbled and took wrong paths at times when the clear guiding light was obscured; but, if

one sought earnestly, the rift in the cloud was to be found.

This was what experience was for—that one might be wiser to-day than one was yesterday. One was to sow beside all waters; the growth and fruit was in wiser hands.

And she found within herself a rich capacity for love of the plain duties of life. She had to go on, fearing nothing; hoping all things—giving as she had received, until life was rounded out in fair proportions.

THE END

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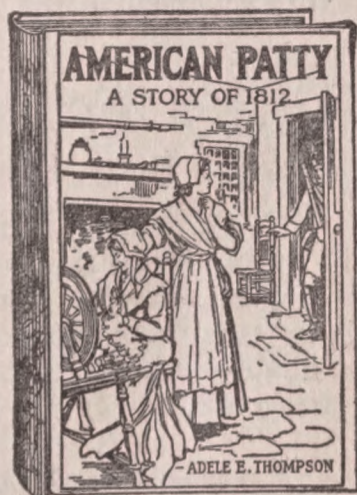
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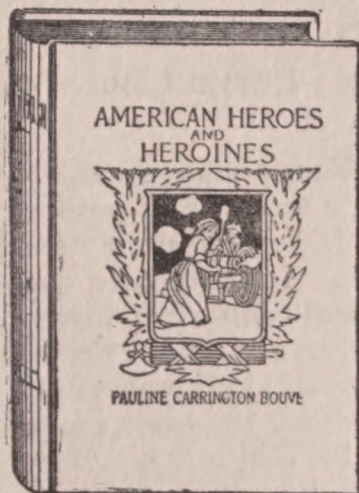
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